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17 RED LION PASSAGE
New & Second

MEDITATION MANUAL

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY JOHN GRIFFIN, ROEHAMPTON.

Meditation Manual

for

Each Day of the Year

(*From the Italian of a Father of the Society of Jesus*)

Adapted for Ecclesiastics, Religious, and others

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INTRODUCTION

LET it be then our chief study to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ. These words at the beginning of the *Imitation of Christ* are but a conclusion from those other of our Divine Lord: *Now this is eternal life that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* (John xvii. 3.)

Upon the nature and the advantages of meditation there is no need to dwell here. In presenting this little book the sole object in view is to afford some small help towards its daily practice. Undoubtedly the best meditation book of all upon the life of Jesus Christ is that of the Four Gospels. This perhaps is too often forgotten. But as the spoken homily or the written commentary upon the Gospel of the day serves the purpose not only of illustrating the same, but also of putting us in the way of doing as much for ourselves, so a good meditation book will often secure the same practical and desirable end. Though it may not always make an appeal to us individually, it may at least make a suggestion.

This manual is translated and adapted from the Italian of a little work, the substance of

which is again taken in part from the *Manna of the Soul*, by Father Paul Segneri, S.J. The meditations are in large part upon the life of our Blessed Lord, but the texts at their beginning always refer to Jesus Christ, mostly in His own words. The meditation for each Sunday is upon the Gospel of the day, thus encouraging the laudable practice of keeping our thoughts in harmony with the spirit of the Church. A few meditations upon Our Lady and St. Joseph are added at the end. Such a book as this evidently does not exclude the practice of making some variety in the subject of our meditation, as on occasion of a special feast. Some, for instance, have the custom of always making their Friday meditation upon the Sacred Passion of our Blessed Lord, or Saturday's upon our Blessed Lady. A few words may be said about the practical use of this meditation book.

(1) After the title of each meditation a text from the Gospel is given or a passage from the Gospel is set down to be read. Three points then follow, outlining a development of the above. These are frequently very short and are intended to be merely suggestive, to serve rather to put us in the way of making reflections of our own which will appeal more forcibly to us. "For," as St. Ignatius says at the very beginning of his *Spiritual Exercises*, "it is not to know much, but it is to understand and savour the matter interiorly that fills and satisfies the soul."

(Annot. ii.) In each point a practical application is in like manner proposed, and also a reminder to excite in our hearts devout affections and to make suitable resolutions.

Meditation consists, as must always be borne in mind, not in a mere acquisition of knowledge, even though it be the *excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ.* (Phil. iii. 8.) The keynote which St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* sets for all the meditations which we make upon the life and kingdom of our Blessed Lord is precisely this, to strive our utmost to know Jesus Christ more clearly, in order to love Him more dearly and to follow Him more nearly. In meditation then the exercise of the understanding is only a means to an end, and that end is the moving of our will, in the same way as the use of the memory serves to furnish food for the intellect. Through the head to the heart is an axiom which St. Ignatius never wearies of insisting upon, "To reflect," as he repeats so often, "in order to derive some fruit." And that this serious application demands an effort on our part he no less clearly lays down. In his meditation, for instance, upon the Last Supper he has these words: "Here to begin with great effort to excite grief," and in that of the Resurrection: "Desiring to be affected and to rejoice," Father Alphonsus Rodriguez, in his work upon *Religious and Christian Perfection* (Tr. iii., ch. 3) sets down in few words the proper place

which acts of the understanding and of the will should occupy in meditation. "The masters of spiritual life commonly teach that the following is what we have to observe in all our prayer, namely, that we are not to spend the whole time in merely meditating and reflecting upon the subject we have in hand. It is chiefly necessary that we move our will with affections and desires which are formed first of all in the heart, in order that they may produce their fruit in due time and may be put into execution. It is this that we have to insist upon and to attend to in our prayer. For as one who digs down deep in order to obtain water or to find some treasure, directly he finds what he was in search of, at once stops and no longer continues to dig, so too as soon as by meditation and the consideration of the understanding you have found the gold and the treasure you were looking for, as soon as you have struck the living water for which your soul was seeking and thirsting, you have now no longer to go on digging or to go deeper down with the understanding. You must now dwell upon those affections and desires of the will until you have drunk sufficient of that water, slaked your thirst, and are satisfied. For this is the end for which prayer is intended and the fruit you have to gather from it. To this object are to be directed all the meditations, considerations, and reflections of the understanding."

(2) What, in the next place, is meant by affec-

tions which we are to endeavour to excite in our hearts? Father De Ponte in the Introduction (Ch. I) to his *Meditations upon the Mysteries of our Holy Faith* lays down this principle:—"The substance of meditation consists principally in exercising the acts of our memory, understanding, and will about the mysteries and truths of our holy faith, speaking within ourselves to God and conversing familiarly with Him, begging of Him His gifts, and negotiating all that is necessary for our salvation and perfection." Of the acts of our memory, understanding and will mention has already been made above. Speaking to God and holding familiar converse with Him may be said to be a further step forward. This converse is exercised by means of those interior sentiments which have been implanted in the human heart as so many created helps to praise and reverence and serve God our Lord and which are all comprised under the general name of affections. Nowhere is there to be found a more complete or exquisite repertory of them than in the Book of Psalms. Herein are set forth as nowhere else the perfections and attributes of God, His wisdom, goodness and power, His majesty, glory and greatness, His immensity, infinity and eternity, His holiness, justice and mercy, His clemency, patience and sweetness, His providence, benignity and fidelity, the beauty, beatitude and peace of God our light, our redeemer, our sanctifier, the creator, preserver, and end of all

things.* On the other hand is to be found in the Psalms the outward expression of sentiments in the human heart which respond to these divine perfections. Of these sentiments or affections some have reference principally to God alone, such as admiration, exultation, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, faith, hope, love, union with God, delight in Him, zeal for His glory; others again concern rather our own souls in relation with God, such as oblation, obedience, conformity, humility, confusion, fear, contrition, self-denial, reparation; lastly, others refer likewise to our neighbour, as charity, forgiveness, patience, meekness, kindness, mercy, zeal for souls. It is then by the exercise of such acts of adoration, thanksgiving, oblation, contrition, charity and so forth, that we are to converse familiarly with God in the course of our meditation. In this Manual of Meditations there is given at the end of each point a verse from the Psalms which corresponds to the reflection which has been suggested therein.

(3) The forming of resolutions is a natural and logical consequence of these reflections if only they be genuine and sincere. To these resolutions Father De Ponte specially refers in the words quoted above: "negotiating all that is necessary for our salvation and perfection." This work consists on our part in forming

* See for example, Psalms cxliv., cx., lxxxv.

practical conclusions in order, as St. Ignatius says, "to derive some fruit" and not to be content with or stop short at mere barren sentiments or velleities. It is precisely then when, by God's grace, the heart is touched and warmed by affections such as those referred to above, that the will finds itself braced up to promise, and effectually to do its best for God and to implore His aid to do so. For it must ever be with us as with the Apostle: *Not I but the grace of God with me.* (1 Cor. xv. 10.) This petition for the divine assistance is made chiefly by means of the *Colloquies*, to which St. Ignatius so often refers us, and which consist in devout converse or intercourse between the soul and God or His saints and angels. Meditation is the occasion whereon we are admitted into the presence of God and are allowed the favour of an audience with His Divine Majesty. St. Ignatius insists very much upon the use of the colloquy, both during the course of the meditation and especially at its end. Explaining its nature in general he says:—"The colloquy is made, properly speaking, just as one friend speaks to another, or a servant to his master, at one time asking for some favour, at another blaming oneself for some fault committed, at another telling out one's affairs and seeking counsel in them." (1st Week, 1st Exercise.) And again, more in particular, in the meditation upon the Incarnation: "At the end a colloquy is to be made, thinking what I

ought to say to the three Divine Persons, or to the Eternal Word, or to the Mother and our Lady, asking according to what each feels in himself." Again at the end of the *Two Standards*:—"I will make a colloquy with our Lady, to obtain for me grace from her Son and our Lord," and a little later on:—"I will ask the same of the Son that He may obtain it for me from the Father." In the contemplation on the Last Supper St. Ignatius tells us that in our colloquies we ought to reason and petition according to the subject matter, "According as I find myself tempted or consoled, and according as I desire to have one virtue or another; according as I seek to dispose myself in one direction or another; according as I seek to grieve or rejoice over the thing that I contemplate; finally asking that which I most earnestly desire regarding certain particular things." Whence two conclusions may be drawn. The first is that this colloquy or intercourse will turn not only upon petitions for graces and favours but will often take the form of thanksgiving, of oblation, and of other affections; the second, that it will often find outward expression in vocal prayers of few words and especially of ejaculations, of which Holy Scripture and the Psalms in particular together with the liturgy of the Church furnish us with an abundant supply.

(4) A word may be added regarding the time before the meditation and the time after, that

no part of a good gift over-pass thee. (Ecclus. xiv. 14). The morning meditation should invariably be prepared over-night, lest *we be as a man that tempteth God.* (Ecclus. xviii. 23). For this purpose the use of some such book as this serves well. The text or the passage from the Gospel which is referred to should be carefully noted or even read in full. The text of the Manual should be then read over quietly once, or still better twice, so that we may be able to make answer to the questions: What is the subject of my meditation? What is the fruit I desire to gain from it? What are the three points? An excellent piece of advice is to write down briefly, in three or four lines, answers to these. This practice has among other advantages that of securing that due preparation is made. At the beginning of the meditation, after placing ourselves in God's presence, we must never omit to ask for light and for grace. After the meditation, a short space of time at one's convenience is most profitably spent in a little reflection as to the success of the meditation and the means taken or to be taken to ensure it, what good thoughts we had during it, what fruit and resolution were the result of it, to *gather up the fragments that remain lest they be lost.* (John vi. 12.) The fixing upon some little text or ejaculation connected with the subject matter of the meditation, often called a *tessera* or watchword, for use during the course of the

day, serves as a very profitable reminder of the morning's meditation.

May this little Manual serve, with the blessing of God, to make us know, love and follow better that *eternal life* which Jesus Christ declares to be found only in the knowledge of His Father, the only true God, and of Himself! From *the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord* (Phil. iii. 8) must result by a happy necessity, a more tender love and a more perfect following of Him Who is *The Way, the Truth, and Life.* (John xiv, 6.)

Feast of St. Joseph, 19 *March*, 1924.

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LAUS DEO SEMPER.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE SECOND COMING OF OUR BLESSED LORD

(Read Luke xxi, 25–33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Church proposes to us in to-day's Gospel the last judgment as a preparation for Christmas, and this for three reasons. The first is that we may prepare well to welcome Christ with love and with reverential fear: with love, because He is about to be born for us at Bethlehem as a little babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, poor, an outcast, laid in a manger, and all this in order to be our Saviour; with fear, because shortly He will come again *with great power and majesty* as our supreme and final judge in the valley of Jehosaphat.

APPLICATION. Reflect for a while upon the meaning of these two comings. The former was in lowliness, the next will be in majesty; the one was in love, the other will be in the rigour of justice; the one as an infant upon a bed of straw weeping and yearning for your salvation, the other as your judge, who will award to you the eternal enjoyment of His Kingdom or sentence you to the woes of an everlasting death. You must then of necessity receive Him in this second coming either with great love or with unspeakable fear.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* (Ps. cxlii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that another reason why to-day

we are reminded of the last judgment is in order that, as Jesus comes at Christmas-time to teach us by word and by example to despise worldly greatness and embrace evangelical poverty, we may the more easily and fully grasp those truths of which men ordinarily take so little notice. At the day of judgment all worldly greatness will have an end, all earthly things will perish by fire and be reduced to ashes. He alone will then triumph and be truly rich, who in order to follow Christ now despises them and tramples them under foot. How the positions of the poor Lazarus and of the rich glutton will then be reversed.

APPLICATION. In what position will you then find yourself? Even at the hour of death these truths will be made quite clear to you. As you are about to breathe your last, the world will be already dead to you, and you will never again see it until it is reduced to ashes at the last day.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord hath pity upon them that fear him, for he knoweth whereof we are made. He remembereth that we are but dust.* (Ps. cii, 13–14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY a last reason why the last judgment is proposed to us to-day is that, as our Lord in His first coming shows to us a throne of grace and in His second will display a throne of rigorous justice, so now we may so strive to approach the throne of His grace as hereafter to rejoice in the effects of His mercy. Thus then, at His second coming in the valley of Jehosaphat, we shall not have to experience the rigours of His justice. *I will judge thee*, He says by the prophet Ezekiel, *according to thy ways, and my eye shall not spare thee, and I will show thee no pity.* (Ezek. vii, 3, 4.)

APPLICATION. Exceeding great is the abundance of His mercy in the cave of Bethlehem. *Let us go therefore*, with St. Paul, *with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy* (Heb. iv, 16), in order that, as the Church prays on Christmas eve, *we may then with all assurance behold Him coming as our Judge Whom now with such joy we welcome as our Saviour.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy is kind: look upon me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.* (Ps. lxviii, 17.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE SIN OF THE ANGELS

Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.
(Matt. xxv, 41.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how extremely rigorous was the justice of God against the rebel angels, who for one sin—and that of thought only—were all included in one common sentence of eternal damnation and in a moment were cast down into the depths of hell. Exceeding great on the other hand was the mercy which God wished to show towards mankind, in order the better to manifest the splendour and glory of His Divine attributes. He could have repaired our ruin in other ways, as for example by the simple forgiveness of our sins or by taking upon Himself an angelic nature. But He wished to redeem us by becoming man, because only one who was both God and man could fully satisfy the Divine justice for our debt; and He desired to raise human nature from the depths of its miseries to the height of the right hand of the Divine Father.

APPLICATION. If you find not in yourself how to praise and thank God worthily for all these blessings, then unite your praise with that of the angelic spirits who, overawed at the glory of God which is so singularly resplendent in this sublime mystery, cry out incessantly before His throne: *Holy, Holy, Holy, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, for thou hast heard the words of my mouth. I will sing praise unto thee in the sight of the angels.* (Ps. CXXXVII, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that God after having manifested His justice against the rebel angels, would also make manifest His mercy towards all mankind, who by the original sin of Adam, and still more by their own personal sins lay under sentence of eternal death. Thereby He would teach us that He is both *merciful and just.*

APPLICATION. Will you not then love the divine goodness which so disinterestedly condescended to show towards mankind such infinite mercy, the fruits of which you now enjoy? What loss would God have suffered had a miserable creature like yourself perished together with the whole human race, when His happiness remained unimpaired by so many hosts of angels being cast into perdition? At least thank Him from your heart that His redeeming mercy towards all mankind has been also extended to you personally, just as if in the whole world there had been no other to redeem excepting yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Praise the Lord, all ye nations, praise him, all ye people; for his mercy is confirmed upon us.* (Ps. CXVI, 1–2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, after God has shown such

extreme mercy towards mankind, He will not fail to exercise rigorous justice towards those who unworthily abuse it, and all the more so as it has been given them more fully to experience the effects of His mercy.

APPLICATION. To you God has granted to know this great mystery by the clear light of faith. He allowed you to be born in the noonday sun of Christianity, and by many inspirations has invited you to the school of Christ as a disciple and as a follower. If then you do not profit by these blessings which have been denied to so many others far better than yourself, then at least have a dread of the rigours of His justice, for not to fear them is to stand in very great danger.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Convert us, O God our Saviour; and turn away thine anger from us.* (Ps. lxxxiv, 5.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECREE OF THE INCARNATION

God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son. (John iii, 16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how wonderful it is that God should love anything that is exterior to Himself, since within Himself He contains in an infinite degree all that there can exist of good outside of Himself. Still greater wonder is it, however, that from all eternity He has loved the world, that is the human race, with all the tender love of a father whilst therefrom He has met with nothing but the blackest ingratitude and the most abominable wickedness.

APPLICATION. Examine yourself and see whether you yourself are not the object of the greatest wonder,

who possessing within you nothing of good and having received all from God, do not love Him Who so loved you, but only love yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?* (Ps. viii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY to what an excess the divine love towards you has urged Him. *He so loved as to give His only-begotten Son.* What greater gift could be conceived than this? To give you not a mere man, not an angel, nor a seraph, but His only-begotten Son, not an adopted one but His own Divine Son consubstantial with Him, one and the same with the Father in substance and only differing in person. In giving you Jesus Christ He has vouchsafed to bestow on you all the treasures that there are in Him as man, as God, and as both man and God: *He that spared not his own Son: but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him, given us all things?* (Rom. viii, 32.)

APPLICATION. And will you not make sacrifice of even one sin or one fault for love of this Lord, Who with such infinite goodness has given you such marvellous proof of His love?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how very great would have been the Father's love for you, had He given His Son to reign on earth, to receive the homage of mankind, to give laws, and to make known to mankind His heavenly doctrine. But is it not a far more stupendous proof of His love, that He should have given Him to suffer and to die for the salvation of men?

In order that you might become a partaker of the

divine nature, He humbled the divine to the human. In order that you might be freed from the guilt of sin and from eternal punishment, He delivered up His only-begotten Son to death, the most painful and the most infamous death of the cross.

APPLICATION. And you, although you have seen this excess of love which passes all bounds and this so unutterable abasement of your Lord, can you still remain so proud that for love of Him you cannot bear the least slight upon your reputation ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

BENEFITS OF THE INCARNATION

He was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. (John i, 9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the state of utter misery in which the human race lay before the coming of our Saviour. It was a state of complete blindness of intellect with no knowledge of man's last end or of his Creator. Its will was perverted by the irregular passions of corrupt nature. It lay beneath the tyranny of demons which held it plunged down in an abyss of vice, forced it to adore as its gods the most impious of mankind, and even the devil himself.

APPLICATION. Oh, what would have become of you had your lot been cast in such calamitous and miserable times ? And yet, how little do you remember to thank God that He willed you should be born at a time when with facility you can come to know your last end, and that He should have given you so many means to attain that end, of which even now so large

a proportion of mankind born among the heathen know nothing whatever.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed be the Lord, for he hath shown his wonderful mercy to me.* (Ps. xxxi, 22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the divine Father gave His Son as a guide and a master to raise the human race from this state of utter ruin, so that with His teaching He might enlighten our darkness, and by the example of His life be to us a guide for the attainment of our eternal salvation, and an encouragement to fight against our enemies. Oh, how great a benefit is this! Yet how little valued is it by mankind, who choose rather to follow the maxims of the world than the teaching of Jesus Christ, and who prefer the allurements of the flesh and the deceits of the devil to the invitation of the Saviour, and to the example which He set.

APPLICATION. Deplore indeed this universal blindness, but at the same time look well to yourself lest you too be found to be of the number of those ungrateful people who are all but countless.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enlighten mine eyes, that I sleep not ever in death.* (Ps. xii, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the claims that oblige you to embrace the teaching and to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Firstly, as a Christian in your holy Baptism you renounced the slavery of the world, the flesh and the devil, and you were enrolled among the servants of Christ. But the servant should follow closely in the footsteps of his master. Secondly, as a child and member of the Holy Catholic Church, possibly an ecclesiastic or a religious, you are numbered among His soldiers and closest companions, and as such

you are under the strictest obligation to imitate Him and to fight under His standard against His enemies.

APPLICATION. Is it possible then that you, a servant, a soldier, and a companion of Jesus Christ, instead of following Him closely, should be ashamed to imitate His example, and instead of fighting on His side should join yourself with His enemies? Reflect then seriously upon yourself, and see whether in your actions and life you conform yourself to the dictates of the world or to the maxims of the Gospel, to the allurements of the devil or to the example of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE MANNER OF THE INCARNATION

And the Word was made flesh. (John i, 14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when the Eternal Father decreed that Jesus Christ should clothe Himself with our human nature in order to work out our redemption, Jesus Christ might have chosen a glorified body and that of a perfect man, without submitting Himself to the weakness and sufferings of infancy. Notwithstanding all this, He chose for our greater profit and advantage to be born an infant as we are: *It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto us,* so that we, seeing Him in this state of utter abasement and become like to one of ourselves in all things, might be the more easily moved to imitate Him and to become like Him.

APPLICATION. Upon this do you also ponder well, seeing that all your progress and perfection consist in

making yourself like to your Creator, Who was made like unto you in all things in order thereby to become your Redeemer.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have said: Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High.* (Ps. lxxxii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the first way in which you must imitate Him is by making yourself a little child: *Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven.* If then in order to be saved you must needs become small, still more in order to arrive at the perfection of your state of life must you become a little child. What then does this mean, to become a little child? It means casting yourself into the arms of Divine Providence, and submitting entirely to the Divine Will, laying aside all anxiety and all thought of yourself like a babe nestling in the arms of its mother.

APPLICATION. Reflect for a moment, if at times you find it hard to be bound down by certain rules and regulations and to be dependent upon the will of others, how much harder it must have been for Jesus to remain for nine months enclosed in His Mother's womb all the while endowed with feeling and the perfect use of reason. This was the first suffering that Jesus Christ bore for you. This reflection is the first step that you must take towards the perfection of your state.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The declaration of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto little ones.* (Ps. cxviii, 130.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus Christ not only became a child, but that He willed to be born of a mother in order that being Himself our own flesh and our own brother, His Mother should become our mother also.

In like manner as Eve was one with Adam in bringing about the fall of man, so for our salvation it was suitable that the Divine Son should co-operate also with His Blessed Mother. The Son was to be our head, the source of all our graces, the Mother the dispenser of these His gifts; the Son our Advocate with the Father, the Mother our Advocate with the Son. Oh, what tender proofs of our Blessed Redeemer's immense love!

APPLICATION. Learn then how to profit in all your needs, by having recourse to and calling to your aid her who by becoming Mother of our Saviour is made the Mother also of your salvation. "*In troubles and in dangers,*" says St. Bernard, "*call upon Mary, think about Mary; let not her name leave your lips nor pass away from your heart.*"

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O look upon me and have mercy on me; give thy command unto thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid.* (Ps. lxxxvi, 16.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE ELECTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

Blessed art thou among women. (Luke i, 42.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, after it had been decreed that the Redeemer should be born of a mother, it was determined in the Council of the Most Holy Trinity who she should be who was to be elected to so exalted a position. Who then would not have thought that for so sublime an office, she would be chosen who was the most noble and most revered lady to be found upon earth? And yet how different are the thoughts of God and those of men! He elected as the Mother of the Most High a virgin utterly unknown to the rest of mankind and the spouse of a poor carpenter.

APPLICATION. And is not this alone enough to make you realise what account God makes of all worldly greatness which is prized so highly by man? Truly the poorest ragged beggar, who has even one degree of grace, is in the sight of God of much more worth than is the greatest monarch on earth. Every least act of virtue, even the giving of a cup of cold water in the name of God, He counts as much more precious than all the gifts of genius, of science, of rank or of wealth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, I am thy servant: I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid.* (Ps. cxv, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that Almighty God beholding from all eternity all possible things, and how in any given condition of things they would act, saw in the Virgin Mary one who in virtue of the grace conferred upon her by the merits of Jesus Christ, would most fully correspond with the gifts of God and in every detail act with the utmost perfection, submitting herself with absolute resignation and humility in all things to the Divine Will. *He regarded the humility of his handmaiden.* (Luke i, 48.) Because of all this it was that she was chosen for the great dignity of the Mother of the Lord.

APPLICATION. Let your heart rejoice that to her was given so exalted a position. Remember too that you also may in some degree become the Mother of God, by doing in all things the Divine Will conformably to what Jesus Christ Himself has said: *Whosoever shall do the will of God he is my brother, my sister, and mother.* (Mark iii, 35.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.* (Ps. cxlii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, that it is proper to God to dispense His gifts in proportion to the office entrusted to any one. Now the dignity of the Mother of God is so sublime that it belongs to an order altogether superior to all creation, *approaching as near as may be*, says St. Thomas, *the limits of the divine*. It was therefore decreed that the Blessed Virgin should be endowed with gifts of grace far beyond those of any other created beings.

APPLICATION. Learn from this, when God through His ministers imposes some work upon you, for which you seem to yourself not to have either sufficient talent or strength, then above all to hope for all the help from heaven, it being the way of our Blessed Lord to give with His commission the means of carrying it out.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor and needy, help me, O God, thou art my helper and my deliverer; O Lord, make no delay.* (Ps. lxix. 6.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Hail, full of grace. (Luke i, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, the privileges of the Blessed Virgin which are signified in those words of the Book of Proverbs: *Wisdom hath built herself a house.* The special home of the Word made man was the Blessed Virgin Mary, which abode the Divine Wisdom designed as His own dwelling place. Consequently He most assuredly would not allow that the demon should first dwell there and take possession of it. And if He would not that the arch-enemy should enter therein before His coming, still less would He permit

it afterwards. Thus it came to pass that the Blessed Virgin was preserved from original sin in an especially privileged manner, by being forestalled by a grace which preserved her from all sin, and exempted her from the slightest inclination to it.

APPLICATION. You who by your misfortune have incurred the stain of original sin, and who also of your own fault have fallen into so many personal ones, pray earnestly to the Blessed Virgin that by the grace of this her great privilege, she may obtain for you from the divine mercy true contrition and the pardon of all your sins.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.* (Ps. l, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that in order that the Blessed Virgin should be a worthy dwelling place of God, the Divine Wisdom was not satisfied merely to keep far from her any taint of sin, but enriched her at that first moment with a fullness of grace greater than that possessed by any of the greatest saints, even at the end of their lives: *Her foundations are in the holy mountains*, by which we are to understand that the foundations of this edifice of Mary, which was to be raised to so great a height and to be incomparably above that of any other of the saints, stood upon the summit of the perfection of them all. Where they indeed ended there she began.

APPLICATION. Rejoice then exceedingly with the Blessed Virgin in this her rich treasury of grace and beg of her, since she is the dispenser of graces, to obtain for you some assistance in your extreme poverty.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As for me I am poor and needy, but the Lord is careful for me.* (Ps. xxxix, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, that the Blessed Virgin never allowed so rich a treasure to remain inactive but increased it every moment. Being free from the evil inclinations and resistance of corrupt nature, she performed every act of virtue with the utmost perfection of intention, so that throughout the whole course of her life she doubled her capital in her every act, and thus became richer in graces than all the inhabitants of heaven together. Oh, what an infinite treasure was hers!

APPLICATION. And you, who find yourself with an amount of grace so small and so miserable, why do you keep it so idle and so unprofitable? The poorer one is the more industrious he usually becomes, yet you act in the opposite way. All during your life what store of merits or of virtue have you laid up? Rouse yourself then once for all from this your sloth, if you do not want to hear at the hour of your death the reproof given to the slothful servant in the gospel, who, finding himself with only one talent, left it idle and buried in the earth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I said, now have I begun: this change is of the right hand of the Most High.* (Ps. lxxvi, 11.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

(Read Matt. xi, 2–10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, in the gospel of this Sunday, the three characteristics of St. John the Baptist praised by Jesus Christ, in order that you also may imitate them. The first is firmness and constancy in the good begun. *What went ye out into the wilderness to see, a reed shaken by the wind?* From his earliest

days St. John began his life in the desert and never wished to leave its solitude, not even in order to rejoice in the personal presence of Jesus Christ. He maintained ever afterwards the same tenour of life, whether in the court of Herod or immured in prison. No change of surroundings could affect the solidity of his virtue.

APPLICATION. Are you such as he was, or are you not rather more like the reed that lets itself be bent by every breath of wind? Do you persevere steadily in your good resolutions and in your exercises of piety? How often do you not for some slight obstacle or small difficulty leave off the good which you have so well begun? *Be steadfast in the way of the Lord.* (Ecclus. v, 12.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed, to keep the judgments of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 106.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, another characteristic of St. John praised by our Blessed Lord, namely, the union in him of a perfect innocency of life with the utmost degree of penance and austerity, clothing himself in camel's hair, eating only locusts, and taking what repose was necessary only upon the bare ground.

APPLICATION. How far have you a love or desire for penance in order to atone for your sins, and to bring into subjection your stubborn and rebellious nature? Oh how mistaken you are if you think to acquire virtue and to taste of the delights of the Spirit, in the midst of the conveniences and delights of the world and of the flesh. What penance do you practise? Mark well that the true spirit of a follower of Jesus Christ is not to *be found in the land of them that live in delights.* (Job xxviii, 13.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *When shall I come and appear before the face of God. My tears have been my bread day and night.* (Ps. xli, 3–4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, that the last great characteristic of St. John was that, whilst leading an angelic life and giving an example of such austere penance, he devoted himself to preaching the coming of the Messiah and to disposing the people to acknowledge and receive Him as the Saviour of the world. And this he did with such zeal and earnestness that, even when confined in Herod's prison, he did not cease to make Him known and to send Him fresh disciples.

APPLICATION. This too is the most sacred service you can desire to render God, namely, the disposal and invitation of all men to the knowledge and the service of Jesus Christ. If you cannot do this by preaching, do it by your good example and holy conversations, and this will be both more beneficial for your neighbour and more profitable for yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.* (Ps. lxviii, 10.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

REPARATION FOR THE SIN OF ADAM

I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly. (John x, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that Adam having by disobedience lost original justice, and having incurred the penalty of death and countless woes for himself and all his descendants, the Divine Goodness would not delay in providing a remedy to such great misery, in order that it might be made evident how much God

has at heart the salvation of all men. *Who will have all men to be saved.* (1 Tim. ii, 4.) It was also in order that you might learn, when you have been surprised into some sin or fault, not to allow yourself to remain in that unhappy state, but to have recourse at once to the remedy by rising up from your fall and not to make matters worse by delay.

APPLICATION. Use this alacrity even in your smallest faults, *e.g.* correcting some act of impatience or of pride or of vanity by an act of the opposite virtue; and thus your gain will be greater than the harm done.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I cried unto thee, O save me, that I may keep thy commandments.* (Ps. cxviii, 146.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that God in preparing a remedy for the sin of Adam, willed also to comfort him by the promise of a Redeemer Who should spring from his own race, and Who would restore superabundantly all the damage wrought by that deceiver the serpent upon him and upon his descendants, freeing them from the slavery of Satan and raising them to a sublime height of glory. What sentiments of gratitude and of tenderness, think you, arose in Adam's heart at this promise?

APPLICATION. Your heart too should experience the like feelings of gratitude, you who have been made a sharer of so much good. By your own personal sins you have renewed in yourself all the evils of original sin, but you must not therefore be alarmed nor lose hope in your Redeemer, Who stands ready on His side to raise you up and do all for your greater good. Know you not that many terribly guilty sinners have been raised by the hand of God to a very high degree of virtue? Cast yourself then at the feet of Jesus

with true confidence, and with the utmost fervour, and doubt not but that all will be well.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.* (Ps. l, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, that the promise of a future Redeemer made to Adam in the beginning, was confirmed by God to his descendants by many prophecies, types and sacrifices, in order that all might rejoice in the remedy and the fruit of the merits of Christ through their faith in Him. The infinite merits of Christ are extended to all times and to all men, whether past or present or future.

APPLICATION. Of these same merits of Jesus Christ you can even more copiously participate, by reason of a clearer knowledge of this mystery of the Incarnation and by means of the Sacraments of the new law. Will you not at least be grateful to Him? How much better than you do, would the Fathers of old have profited by the same, had they received the lights and the favours that have been accorded to you. Be abashed and deplore your own ingratitude.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.* (Ps. cxxix, 7.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

EXPECTATION OF THE MESSIAH

I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see. (Matt. xiii, 17.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that although God had decreed an adequate remedy for the sin of Adam by His promise of a future Redeemer, yet He delayed His

coming on earth for more than five thousand years, during which the patriarchs and prophets and all His chosen people awaited the advent of the Messiah with incessant tears and fervent longings. And this for three reasons. The first was to teach us that, in order to obtain the graces which God intends to bestow upon us, we should ask and implore them of Him with ardent and persevering prayer.

APPLICATION. Here then is the reason why you do not obtain the graces that you need, because you are cold and inconstant in asking for them. If you find you are not heard at once, you get vexed and give up asking.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, the God of my salvation: I have cried in the day, and in the night before thee.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that the second reason of this delay was that as the human race was before the coming of Christ sunk in the corruption of vice, and lay miserably buried in the thick darkness of ignorance, the utter need and intense benefit of a Redeemer, in order to enlighten mankind and restore it to health, might be made all the more manifest.

APPLICATION. In a like manner does our Lord often deal with you. He delays to free you from some annoying temptation or from some troublesome work, in order that you may the better realise your own weakness, that you may humble yourself the more and that you may the more fully value His goodness when it shall be His good pleasure to set you free.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and he was attentive to me.* (Ps. xxxix, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY another, and a last reason of this

His delay, was because He willed to come at a time when the heart of His chosen people was wholly set on earthly things, and when they looked forward to the Messiah only in order to be liberated from the yoke of the Romans. Seeing Him then appear upon earth so poor and so despised they scorned Him, they persecuted Him, and they condemned Him to the death of the Cross, and it was by the merits of this His death He was to free us from the slavery of the devil and of sin, and to win for us the reward of His eternal kingdom.

APPLICATION. Oh what a precious lesson is this for you! Your heart often longs to do some good in your work or perhaps in your particular ministry, but you are disheartened at finding yourself ignored by your companions, mortified by your superiors, nay possibly persecuted by others. In consequence you draw back from doing the good you had at heart. But it should be just the opposite. Now is precisely the best time for you to exercise patience, humility and charity, and to work merely to please God and thus become richer in virtue and in merits. This is the way also to conform yourself more to the example of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My father and my mother have left me: but the Lord hath taken me up.* (Ps. xxvi, 10.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

ESPOUSALS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

A virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph. (Luke i, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that although the Blessed Virgin had made a vow of virginity, yet she consented to be espoused to St. Joseph, having received an assur-

ance from heaven that this would be no prejudice to her resolve, but that rather it would be a means of keeping concealed the virtue of virginity, which at that time was little known among mankind, and would at the same time make it more pleasing in the sight of God. Every virtue has great worth and merit in His sight, but when it is hidden from the eyes of men and seen only by God how much greater is its value as regards both humility and merit!

APPLICATION. And how do you act? Are you careful that God alone shall know the good that you do, or do you like rather to parade it before men? The grain of wheat except it be buried shall not bring forth fruit that is of any worth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The words of my mouth shall be such as may please: and the meditation of my heart always in thy sight.* (Ps. xviii, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that God willed that the Blessed Virgin should be espoused to St. Joseph, in order that the great mystery of the Divine Incarnation, wrought through the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, should remain concealed. It was thus in accord with the dispositions of Divine Providence and the economy of our redemption that this secret mystery should for some length of time be hidden.

APPLICATION. To you also it would be of the greatest advantage to keep concealed not only the good that you do and your virtues, but also any talents and abilities that you may have until God shall order otherwise through those who are placed over you. You would then be imitating Jesus Christ, Who lived a hidden life until He was thirty years old, and allowed Himself to be commonly regarded as no more than an ordinary man.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden from them that fear thee. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy face, from the disturbance of men.* (Ps. xxx, 20–21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, that these espousals were willed by God in order to preserve the Divine Son and His Mother from the slightest breath of ill-fame, and that the Blessed Virgin might have a help in safe-guarding the life of her Son in the midst of poverty and even persecution. Conclude then what a blessing this marriage was in reality to the Blessed Virgin, though it had first seemed to run counter to the vow she had made.

APPLICATION. So will it always be with you if only you let yourself be guided by Divine Providence. You will always find relief and comfort where most of all you feared difficulty. Learn then to trust yourself entirely to God and to leave in His hands all care of yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust ; I said, thou art my God. My lot is in thy hands.* (Ps. xxx, 15–16.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL

(Read Luke i, 26–29.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that although Almighty God had decreed so long before to redeem mankind by means of the Word Incarnate, yet He would not that His divine plan should be carried out in the person of the Blessed Virgin without her full consent. Accordingly He sent to her the Angel Gabriel, in order

that she might of her own free will consent to become the Mother of God. A like method does God pursue in working out the salvation of each one of us. He wills not to raise any one to the dignity of a son of God without his own consent. Consequently He sends His messages, that is to say His inspirations, in order that man should by his own free will co-operate in the acquisition of so high a dignity, which he can never attain to without the concurrence of his own will. *He Who created you*, says the great St. Augustine, *without yourself, will not save you without yourself.*

Application. Ask yourself how far you have until now corresponded with the divine inspirations? How far have you been promptly faithful to them? This neglect on your part is the principal reason of your living perhaps far short of what God expects of you.

Affections and resolutions. *That I should do thy will; O my God, I have desired it and thy law is in the midst of my heart.* (Ps. xxxix, 9.)

Consider secondly, that before giving her consent the Blessed Virgin pondered well the proposal, to see how the title of Mother could be consistent with her vow of virginity. *How shall this be done?* (Luke i, 34.) In this she manifested a consummate prudence, and together with it an intense love of purity.

Application. You on your part at one time perhaps do not give ear to God's inspiration, at another you rush at a resolution without reflection and without counsel. Learn from the Blessed Virgin to listen to the voice of God which speaks to your heart, and also in serious matters not to act without the advice of your confessor or director lest otherwise you take a false step.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge.* (Ps. cxviii, 66.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Blessed Virgin was not only chosen in order that she might consent to and accept the dignity of Mother of God, but she was also chosen to receive in the name of the whole human race the Word Incarnate as Lord and Redeemer of the world. In this way therefore she was made a protectress to all mankind, and also the channel of all those blessings which the Incarnation has brought to us. Consequently, as through her there came to us all the blessings of the Divine Word, so in like manner through means of her we receive all the marvellous benefits of the most sacred humanity.

APPLICATION. This being so, beg of her with all possible fervour to obtain for you the grace of which she is dispenser, seeing that she is the distributor of all the gifts of heaven. Above all, implore of her to obtain for you the grace to correspond faithfully with the inspirations of God, upon which your welfare so much depends.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How have I loved thy law, O Lord: it is my meditation all the day long.* (Ps. cviii, 97.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MARY'S REPLY TO THE ANGEL GABRIEL

(Read Luke i, 29–38.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that in this visit of the Archangel the Blessed Virgin made three heroic acts of humility. The first was when she heard herself praised as most blessed among women and declared full of grace. Thereupon she felt no complacency

nor the slightest exaltation, but on the contrary, *she was troubled at his saying*, albeit that praise came from the lips of a heavenly messenger from whom she could not fear any deception.

APPLICATION. Oh how quite other is your behaviour from that of this most humble Virgin! When you are praised you are at once elated, you often seek after such praise, and even at times you are not ashamed to praise yourself. On the other hand, when you justly are corrected for your faults you are troubled, and you grow indignant. Thus it is that your pride, one might almost say, strives to emulate the humility of the Blessed Virgin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, the second act of humility on the part of the Blessed Virgin, who directly she saw herself so exalted abased her own nothingness and declared herself to be the most lowly handmaid of that God Who was about to become her son and the fruit of her womb. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.* It was precisely this humility that merited for her so exalted a dignity: *for He hath regarded the humility of His handmaiden.*

APPLICATION. What feelings do you experience in yourself, when God visits you with any gift or specially favours you in time of prayer? If at such times you recognise your own unworthiness and animate yourself the more to serve Him faithfully, it is well with you. But if you exalt yourself and grow proud, fear with good reason lest you be deprived of these gifts and be severely humbled. *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy; and teach me thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 124.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, that the Blessed Virgin, most deeply versed in the holy Scriptures and instructed by God in the divine plan of our redemption, knew clearly beforehand all the sufferings and ill-treatment that her Divine Son would meet with during the course of His life and particularly at His death. Thus then in offering herself as His handmaid she understood well that she was offering herself as His inseparable companion in His labours and in His ignominy, accepting with equal readiness to participate resignedly in the sufferings of the Son of God as to be exalted to the dignity of Mother of God. Herein lay her third act of humility.

APPLICATION. You too must do likewise. The more our Lord favours you, the more faithful and ready should you show yourself in accompanying Him to Calvary. God grant that you may never be of the number of those servants who the more they are favoured by their Master become the more insolent and rebellious.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered unto me?* (Ps. cxv, 12.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE INCARNATION

And the Word was made flesh. (John i, 14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that as at the words of Consecration uttered by the priest in the Mass, the Body of Jesus Christ is immediately made present, so at the

words of the Blessed Virgin there was created the Soul, and there was formed the sacred Body of Christ in the womb of Mary. His soul was endowed with all those highest gifts that could render it worthy of being the dwelling place of God. His Body on the contrary, wanting all those gifts of glory which were its due, was framed with the utmost possible sensitiveness in order to be capable of suffering the more.

APPLICATION. And you till now, how have you regarded your gifts of mind and body? Have you valued the holiness and the virtues of your soul more than the health and the natural gifts of your body? Acknowledge the mistake you have made, and whilst remembering that for your sake Jesus Christ chose to take to Himself a body, more exquisitely fitted than those of others to suffer, learn to accept willingly for love of Him and for the good of your soul all your infirmities and all your bodily sufferings.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O my God.* (Ps. xxxix, 8–9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that at the same moment as His soul was created and His body was formed, the most sacred humanity was hypostatically united with the Divine Word so that man was made God, and God was made man, and by that personal union that blessed soul rejoiced from the first moment of its existence in the beatific vision. It was enriched with all the treasures of the Divinity and with all plenitude of grace, yet still it could not only in itself grow in merit as regarded the future glory of that sacred soul, but it could moreover merit for our advantage, and as our

head cause to overflow upon us all His gifts and all His merits.

APPLICATION. Rejoice, then, in all these benefits bestowed upon that sacred humanity, and thank God for the immense graces brought to you through Jesus Christ. How great would have been your wretchedness had you not Jesus Christ for your redeemer and for your head? The sacred humanity of Jesus Christ received all the treasures of the Divinity through its intimate union with the Word. You also, the more perfectly you are united with Christ by love, the more surely will you become partaker of His treasures.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the complacency and the joy of the Most Holy Trinity in this the greatest work of the Divine omnipotence: the Father rejoicing in having fulfilled His promise, the Word in having communicated the Divinity which He had received from the Father to man who is the image of the Father, and the Holy Spirit in having manifested in this gift the highest degree of His divine love. All the angels too rejoiced to whom the command had been given that they should acknowledge and adore the sacred humanity, as head of the whole Church both triumphant and militant.

APPLICATION. Do you also adore Him and protest with your whole heart that Him alone will you obey and serve as your Lord, your Captain and your Redeemer.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let all the angels of God adore him.* (Ps. xcvi, 7.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
THE TESTIMONY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

(Read John i, 19–28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how perfectly St. John the Baptist followed the counsel contained in the words: *the greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things.* (Ecclus. iii, 20.) Although in the sight of God and in the eyes of men he was so exceedingly great as to be even thought to be the Messiah, yet he humbled himself, utterly refusing honour that became the Messiah alone: *He confessed, I am not the Christ.* Ambition for divine honours was the ruin first of the angels, and then of Adam. By the same way too did Lucifer hope to compass the fall of John the Baptist, but all to no purpose.

APPLICATION. Your pride probably does not make you aspire to divine honours. But how often do you seek after honour amongst men, and aim at an esteem out of all proportion with your merits? When you hear others out of mere flattery praise you, do you then check them or are you not rather pleased and gratified? God grant that you be not of the number of those who seek to pass themselves off as being something much better than they are.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou wilt save the humble people, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud.* (Ps. xvii, 28.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that St. John humbled himself not only in refusing honours that were due to God alone, but also those which he deserved, saying that he was neither Elias nor a prophet, although Christ Himself had called him Elias and had extolled him as *more than a prophet.* In the same manner as the

proud spare no efforts to gain honours which they do not deserve, so too do the humble endeavour as far as ever they may to conceal all that might gain for them any respect or esteem.

APPLICATION. Reflect for a moment upon yourself and see if you try always to hide your talents, your knowledge and your gifts, in order to escape praise, or whether in your pride you do not rather seek to conceal your faults and your mistakes in order to escape all blame.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am brought to nothing, and I knew not. I am become as a beast before thee, and I am always with thee.* (Ps. lxxii, 22–23.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that St. John, when obliged to give some account of himself, was silent as to his noble parentage and the dignity of his father in his sacerdotal character. He merely made allusion to what was absolutely necessary, namely to the office which he held as precursor of the Messiah : *I am the voice of one crying in the way, make straight the path of the Lord.* He called himself a voice to show that he aspired to no higher function than that of a voice, which has no merit and no worth of itself but derives all from him who moves it and makes it speak.

APPLICATION. Whenever you have to undertake some office such as that of preaching or teaching or some other honourable ministry, in which you must necessarily make some show of your knowledge or of your talent, learn then from St. John not to take the glory to yourself, but to refer all to God Who has given you the necessary gifts and the strength : *What hast thou not received? and if thou hast received why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* (1 Cor. iv, 7.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.* (Ps. cxiii, 9.)

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CHRIST OFFERS HIMSELF AS OUR REDEEMER

I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. (John x, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the humanity of Jesus Christ, when in that first moment it beheld itself raised to an intimate union with the Divinity, seized with an ecstasy of intense wonder, forthwith poured itself out in affections of the most ardent love, of reverence, and of submission to the Sovereign Majesty. Burning to correspond entirely with the divine liberality, it offered itself completely to the good pleasure of the Father, and to all that it might seem good to Him to command. That was the first moment when God began to be fully recognised and honoured by human nature, for this could only be done by one who was at once God and man.

APPLICATION. You of yourself can never offer an act of worship proportioned to the greatness of the Divinity. Accustom yourself therefore to unite the acts of adoration you offer to God with those of the most Sacred Humanity. In this manner then will they become supremely acceptable to God, for Jesus Christ even from His Mother's womb began to honour the Divinity in your behalf and in that of all the human race.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will.* (Ps. xxxix, 8–9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ never once interrupted or relaxed the fervour of that offering to His Divine Father made from His Mother's womb, but continued it constantly in every act and incident of His life: *Those things which are pleasing to him I do always.* (John viii, 29.) Hence the whole life of Jesus was an uninterrupted continuation of that first offering which He made of Himself to His Divine Father.

APPLICATION. When you entered into yourself and began a life of Christian or of religious perfection, you meant to make an entire offering of yourself to God's service. Examine now how far you have carried it out. How often have you, instead of doing the Divine Will, gone against the will of God in search of your own comfort and convenience! Humble yourself therefore and repeat often within yourself: Why hast thou come into this world, or into this particular state of life?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Father had given Him command that He should redeem the human race by making our debts His own, and by imparting to us His merits in order thereby to satisfy the Divine Justice. Moreover, He had declared it to be His good pleasure that He should accomplish this by suffering the death of the Cross, and that He would moreover accept on our behalf every other act of His, whether of suffering or contempt, seeing that all was of infinite worth. Jesus then in order perfectly to fall in with the good pleasure of His Divine Father, accepted the death of the Cross accompanied as it was by an ocean of sufferings and an abyss of

contempt: *Who having joy set before him endured the cross.* (Heb. xii, 2.)

APPLICATION. What have you to say for yourself who, in order to escape any little inconvenience or any trifling slight, have so often opposed the Divine Will in things expressly commanded you? Does not the example of Jesus Christ cover you with shame?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The law of thy mouth is good unto me, above thousands of gold and silver.* (Ps. cxviii, 72.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE VISITATION

(Read Luke i, 39–56.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ did not delay in beginning the work of redemption, but even before coming forth from His Mother's womb went to sanctify St. John. He might have done this without leaving Nazareth, nevertheless it pleased Him to inspire His Mother to visit St. Elizabeth and through her to work a signal blessing in St. John. Thus we see that as she was the means of the sanctification of St. John and also of the first miracle wrought by Christ at the marriage feast of Cana, so for us likewise is she at all times the channel of all those spiritual and temporal graces which we can hope for from the divine liberality. *Such is the will of Him Who has willed that we should have all things through Mary.* (St. Bernard.)

APPLICATION. If you really grasped this great truth, how much more eager would you be to gain the protection of our Blessed Lady by your devotion to her and to have recourse to her in all your needs.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God is wonderful in his saints.* (Ps. lxviii, 36.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the promptitude with which the Blessed Virgin obeyed the inspiration: *She went into the hill country with haste.* (Luke i, 39.) Neither her love of solitude nor the quiet of contemplation could make her hesitate, nor the fear of those dangers which her Divine Son might encounter in such a perilous journey.

APPLICATION. And what is your manner of acting who either do not give ear to the inspirations of God, or are slow in responding to them by letting your self-love invent a thousand imaginary difficulties? If you knew what blessings you lose in thus making so little of inspirations from heaven, you would not be so careless in obeying the voice of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will hearken what the Lord shall say within me, for he will speak peace unto his people.* (Ps. lxxxiv, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Blessed Virgin did not take this wearisome journey merely to pay a visit of ceremony, nor from curiosity to discover whether what the Angel had spoken about Elizabeth were verified, still less from vanity in order to parade her dignity as mother of the Most High. She went moved simply by obedience to the Divine Will, and in order to co-operate in the sanctification of the Precursor.

APPLICATION. You willingly accept the discomfort of some hard work, or the fatigue of some course of study, appointed by those who are over you. But what as to your motives? Is it purely for the service of God or rather in order to follow the natural bent of your own nature, to gain praise to yourself or to

make parade of your talents? Would you be equally ready to give up your own convenience, where there is question of doing some work for God's good pleasure and where self-love would find no satisfaction? The workings of your heart are exceedingly subtle and very hidden. Examine therefore very carefully your motives of action, for upon them depends the solidity of your virtues.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give me understanding and I will search thy law: and I will keep it with my whole heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 34.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE SANCTIFICATION OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

(Read Luke i, 39–56.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that at the first salutation of the Blessed Virgin to St. Elizabeth, St. John was endowed by the Infant Jesus with three special blessings. The first was to be cleansed from original sin by the infusion of sanctifying grace. The second was to receive by anticipation the use of reason so as to be capable of gaining merit. The third was clearly to understand the great mystery of the Divine Incarnation, and forthwith, even in his mother's womb to rejoice and exult in it. All these blessings came to St. John by reason of and through the words of the Blessed Virgin. Similar blessings will she obtain for all those who have recourse to her, and who love to present themselves before her imploring her to be cleansed from their sins, to be assisted in the path of virtue, and to be enlightened in the divine mysteries.

APPLICATION. If you desire that the Divine Infant

should enrich you with His gifts, do you also have recourse to the Blessed Virgin and beg of her to obtain for you that you may hear her words in your heart: *Let thy voice sound in my ears.* (Cant. ii, 14.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just.* (Ps. cxvii, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how this salutation illuminated the soul of St. Elizabeth making her discern the dignity of Mary and the mystery of the Incarnate Word, break forth as she did into most exalted praises of the Blessed Virgin and extol her with the glorious title of Mother of God. Neither did she omit to thank her for having deigned to visit her and to have undertaken so perilous a journey: *and whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?*

APPLICATION. You too should excite in your own heart similar affections of praise and of gratitude, whenever you receive any grace through the Blessed Virgin, extolling her loving goodness in deigning from her exalted throne to look down with her eyes of mercy upon one so unworthy as you are, and yet how easily do you forget her in whose favours you so often rejoice.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem; let my right hand be forgotten; let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember thee.* (Ps. cxxxvi, 5–6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the Blessed Virgin made no reply to all these praises, but all aflame with love of God set herself with her most glorious canticle to magnify the Lord and to humble herself: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaiden.*

APPLICATION. How far different are your sentiments when you are praised! Instead of acknowledging and thanking the giver of all the good you have, you become vain and proud. Beseech then the Blessed Virgin to obtain for you a spirit of true humility, and a lively desire of directing all your actions to the glory of God so that you also may be able to say, *My soul doth magnify the Lord.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art a strong helper. Let my mouth be filled with praise that I may sing of thy glory and of thy greatness all the day long.* (Ps. lxx, 7–8.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE TRIAL OF ST. JOSEPH

(Read Matt. i, 18–25.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Joseph, who was so holy and so pleasing in the sight of God as to merit to be the spouse of the Mother of God and the guardian of the Word Incarnate, could never have contemplated that his espousals with Mary would have brought him such bitter sorrows. For so it was that the mystery of the Incarnation was concealed from him, although it had been clearly revealed to St. John and St. Elizabeth. But this is the ordinary way of Divine Providence, which afflicts those who are the most just in order to enrich them the more with merits, and that they may be examples of more heroic virtues. What an admirable example St. Joseph gave of prudence, of patience and of charity! Notwithstanding his knowledge of her condition, he does not condemn the Blessed Virgin, he does not inwardly complain to God or outwardly manifest his grief.

APPLICATION. When you imagine you have been in some way injured, you at once become disturbed and grow indignant. You instantly condemn the offender for what does not in fact exist or for more than there really is. You cry out and complain. Learn from Joseph patience in bearing the wrongs you may have to suffer, prudence in not noticing them, charity in concealing them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my patience, O Lord; my hope, O Lord, from my youth.* (Ps. lxx, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that our Blessed Lady was well aware of Joseph's intense affliction and of the thought he entertained of putting her away. Able as she was to calm this anguish in the heart of her spouse by discovering to him the mystery, she chose at all costs rather to keep silence about her great privilege and to leave to Divine Providence the defence of her innocence.

APPLICATION. Does not this make you ashamed of being so ready to publish whatever may redound to your own praise, and so quick to excuse yourself whenever you happen to be blamed? Let it suffice that God sees your innocence. Leave the care of defending you from calumnies to Him Who knows well how to turn them to your profit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; I said, thou art my God.* (Ps. xxx, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the consolation of St. Joseph, in finding himself delivered by the loving providence of God from his extreme anguish. Through the ministry of an angel there was revealed to him the mystery of the Divine Incarnation, and the incom-

parable sanctity of the Blessed Virgin. Thereupon he realised that he himself was no other than the spouse of the Mother of God, and the guardian on earth of the Son of God. Forthwith he would have exclaimed with the Psalmist: *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* (Ps. xciii, 19.)

APPLICATION. So too will it be with you, if you know how to bear your afflictions in a truly Christian spirit, so as even in this life to enjoy a hundredfold of the divine consolations, and in the next to receive an eternal reward.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Oh let thy mercy be my comfort, according unto thy word unto thy servant.* (Ps. cxviii, 76.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

EXPECTATION OF THE NATIVITY

It came to pass that her days were accomplished. (Luke ii, 6.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the ardent desires of the ancient Fathers to see the promised Messiah. Listen to their sighs and prayers through the long ages. *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just.* (Is. xlv, 8.) It pleased God that this His coming should be so long deferred, because the more intense is the desire the more ceaselessly does it make us plead and pray, and earnest prayer is the surest means of gaining all that God has ordained to bestow upon us.

APPLICATION. If you do not feel a real longing for Jesus to be born spiritually within your heart, you will not be worthy to receive Him. Redouble there-

fore at this season your supplications as did the ancient Fathers, so that you may deserve to rejoice at His coming.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Stir up thy might, and come and save.* (Ps. lxxix, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the intense longing of the Blessed Virgin, to bring to the light of day her divine offspring. This desire was increased in her heart specially for two reasons. The first was in order herself to be able to worship and serve the Son of the Divine Father, Who had deigned to choose her as His Mother, the other in order to give to the world its Redeemer, for the salvation of mankind, and to rescue the human race from all its miseries.

APPLICATION. You too should desire that Jesus Christ may come to you spiritually, not only for your own advantage, but much more that you may offer Him your homage, and that you also may co-operate with Him in the salvation of others.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord God of hosts, convert us ; and show thy face, and we shall be saved.* (Ps. lxxix, 20.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the still more fervent longing of Jesus Himself. He had remained for nine months within the narrow limits of His Mother's womb, offering to His Father on our behalf the keen suffering He underwent in that darksome prison. When however He saw the hour of His going forth approach, He rejoiced, not indeed to leave that straitened space, but from His longing to begin at once His journey from the cave to Calvary for the redemption of mankind. *He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.* (Ps. xix, 6.)

APPLICATION. How different are your desires and

what quite other longings are yours. You are immediately displeased at some work that has been given you, you are vexed at being made subject to another's will, because you wish to enjoy more liberty and greater ease, but if you really loved Jesus you would not grow weary of suffering some trifle for love of Him. Love never gets weary nor complains, nor in fact is there ever greater proof of love than when there is labour and suffering for the beloved. Only love Jesus truly and every suffering and all labour will seem to you easy and delightful.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What have I in heaven but thee, and beside thee what do I desire upon earth?* (Ps. lxxii, 25.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE DECREE OF CÆSAR AUGUSTUS

(Read Luke ii, 1–5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that from all eternity the Divine Father had decreed not only the time of the birth of Christ, but also the place, the manner, and all the circumstances of it, which had also been foretold by the prophets. Consequently it came to pass that at a given time, Cæsar Augustus in his pride and avarice issued an edict that the whole empire should be enrolled, and that a tax should be paid by each one, and all this in order to bring about that the Word Incarnate should be born not at Nazareth, but in a cave that served as a shelter for beasts of burden.

APPLICATION. And to you how often does that which is a most wise design of God seem to be merely the work of your fellow-beings? And consequently you are disquieted and disturbed, you revolt against

trials that thereby you are put to. Happy indeed would you be, did you but know how to recognise the loving dispositions of God Who for your good sometimes makes use of the evil designs of others.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let me know that this is thy hand; and thou, O Lord, hast done it.* (Ps. cviii, 27.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Blessed Virgin bowed her head in submission to the decree. She did not excuse herself from obedience by reason of her weakness, nor from paying the tribute because of her poverty. She recognised in the unjust decree of Augustus the most perfect will of God, conformably to that of the Apostle: *Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh with fear and trembling in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ, not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart.* (Eph. vi, 5, 6.)

APPLICATION. You, who have so often bound yourself to obey those whom God has placed over you as superiors, in order to interpret for you the Divine Will, are you prompt in carrying out whatever is commanded you, even though it be difficult and unpleasant to you? Or do you not rather draw back and excuse yourself and show your repugnance? Oh how ashamed ought you not to feel of yourself, when you reflect upon the obedience of the Mother of God to this edict of Cæsar!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.* (Ps. cxliii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Blessed Virgin together with St. Joseph undertook this long and painful journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in winter time, and with

all the inconveniences of extreme poverty. Small account however did she make of these discomforts, because she recognised therein that they were obeying the will of heaven, and because she carried her Divine Son with her in order that He might be born in a stable, according to the dispositions of Divine Providence.

APPLICATION. If you will but stay in the company of Jesus and by your love bear Him in your heart, every affliction will seem to you light in the hope of one day rejoicing in His presence.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST

(Read Luke iii, 1–6.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that St. John, as the precursor of Christ, makes clear the way for you and teaches you how to prepare well for the birth of our Lord. *Prepare ye the way of the Lord.* This preparation may be reduced to three things, namely, penance, humility, and a pure intention. And first of all as to penance: *Preaching the baptism of penance.* (Mark i, 4.)

APPLICATION. It is in vain for you to hope that Jesus will come and be born spiritually in your heart, if you do not remove from it all obstacles of sin and of faults. By such exercises of interior and exterior penance you will suitably dispose your heart for the birth of Christ. This penance must not only be interior and consist in a true sorrow for all the sins you have committed, and for the ingratitude you have

hitherto shown towards the divine goodness. It must also be exterior by the mortification of your senses, and especially of those which you have most failed to guard.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My tears have been my bread day and night.* (Ps. xli, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you must join humility to penance: *Every mountain and every hill shall be made low.* (Isa. xl, 4.) You will never be able by penance alone perfectly to cleanse your heart so as to make it worthy of receiving the Holy Infant. It is humility alone that can supply for all.

APPLICATION. Acknowledge then your lack of all good. Confess your unworthiness, and beg of Him that as for love of you He has condescended to be born in a poor wretched stable, which by His divine presence He has transformed as it were into an antechamber of heaven, so He may deign to be born in your heart, which till now has been an abode of unworthy faults, and change it into a dwelling place of virtues pleasing both to God and man.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do thou deliver me, for I am poor and needy.* (Ps. cviii, 21–22.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you must aim also at having a pure intention. *Make straight His paths*, which is as much as to say, that all the preparation on your part must be made purely to please and do honour to the Divine Infant. Be not of the number of those who prepare for the holy Birth of Christ, only to spend the feast with greater joy and in mere merriment. Make it rather your intention to give yourself wholly to the Divine Infant, and to devote yourself entirely to His divine service.

APPLICATION. If then Jesus Christ condescends to be born in the cave of Bethlehem only that He may

offer all His labours and all His fatigues, His Blood and His life, for your good, with no thought whatever of Himself, do you also prepare to receive Him with the firm resolution of spending for Him all your fatigues and all your labours together with your whole self, having no other aim in view than to serve Him the better and to love Him the more.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said: thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.* (Ps. cxli, 6.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

ARRIVAL AT BETHLEHEM

There was no room for them in the inn. (Luke ii, 7.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the Blessed Virgin together with her husband St. Joseph, having arrived at Bethlehem, where on account of Cæsar's edict there was a great concourse of people, wearied as she was with the journey, went from door to door begging a poor lodging where to rest and to give birth to her first-born. This then is the preparation made for the birth of the Messiah promised so long before by heaven, and so ardently sighed for by His people: no bed whereon to lie nor roof to shelter Him! *The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.* (Luke ix, 58.)

APPLICATION. And you who make profession of following Christ made poor for us, are you not ashamed to be enamoured of comforts and on the look out for superfluities both in dress and in food? And when everything is not to your liking, you never cease to complain. Oh, what reason here for confusion!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I had rather be despised in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of sinners.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph long continued their search, begging in charity the shelter of some poor house wherein the King of glory and the Monarch of the universe might be born and laid, but they found every door shut against them and every convenience refused. What feelings, think you, arose in the Blessed Virgin's heart at such rejection? She was not troubled, she did not complain as you do when you meet with any refusal. She did but grieve at the sad blindness of her people, who gave no welcome to the Son of God so long expected and so long desired: *He came unto his own and his own received him not.* (John i, 11.) And yet those people had some excuse, as they knew not who it was who sought a lodging, nor for whom it was asked.

APPLICATION. But you, who know well Who it is Who comes with His inspirations to ask an abode in your heart, in order to make it more holy, what excuse can you hope to have for the refusals you have so often, alas! given Him?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart hath said to thee: my face hath sought thee; thy face, O Lord, will I seek.* (Ps. xxvi, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the Blessed Virgin, to whom none would open their doors was obliged to turn with St. Joseph into a poor shelter for cattle. Entirely did she resign herself to the dispositions of Divine Providence, that the Incarnate Word should be born in a stable, deprived of all conveniences and exposed to the bitter cold of winter, so as to give to us all an example of despising the comforts and display

of this world, as well also as of being despised by the world itself.

APPLICATION. How far do you correspond with such perfection of virtue? How far do you strive to imitate these examples of despising the world and of being in turn despised by it?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have had delight in the way of thy testimonies even as in all riches.* (Ps. cxviii, 14.)

CHRISTMAS DAY. DECEMBER 25
THE BIRTH OF OUR BLESSED LORD

(Read Luke ii, 6–14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the Blessed Virgin, knowing that the time of her delivery was now at hand, withdrew herself apart and being wrapt in the most sublime contemplation, without any pain or detriment, beheld lying before her the Divine Infant Jesus, by Whom she was at once enriched with immense treasures of grace, and, inundated with an ineffable and most heavenly joy, like the Divine Father exclaimed: *Amidst the splendours of the saints I have brought thee forth.* (Ps. cix, 4.)

APPLICATION. Rejoice with the Blessed Virgin in having so joyfully given to the world the fruit of her womb. Strive to profit all you can from this day which brought such joy to heaven and happiness to earth, for it is indeed a day of the most abundant graces.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed be the name of his majesty for ever; and the whole earth shall be filled with his majesty.* (Ps. lxxi, 19.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the Virgin Mary, recognising the holy Babe as her own, and also as the Son

of the Heavenly Father, embraced Him with all a mother's tenderness, and at the same time adored Him with divine worship. Here pause awhile, and think what were those acts of worship by which she adored Him as her God and her Creator; what were those tender affections with which she thanked Him for having chosen her as His Mother, thanked Him too in the name of the whole human race, for having thus humbled Himself for the redemption of all. Observe too the love and the devotedness of St. Joseph, who together with the Holy Virgin offered and consecrated all his strength, and all his labours, to support and to serve the Divine Infant in this His state of utter destitution.

APPLICATION. Reflect upon yourself also, and then from the depths of your heart unite your worship, your affections, and your offering with those of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth!* (Ps. viii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how St. Joseph placed a little straw in the manger, and then the Mother, after having wrapped her Divine Child in swaddling clothes, laid Him down therein between two animals, an ox and an ass.

APPLICATION. And you, as you see Him whose throne is above the Seraphim so abasing Himself for love of you as to lie between two animals in such extreme poverty, will you not once for all resolve to bear gladly for love of Him those few hardships of poverty and of labour which your state of life may entail. Oh! how ought you not rather to long for the utmost degree of poverty in all things, in order so

to conform yourself to the example of Jesus, Who from the first moment of His birth to the last hour of His life could say with truth, *I am poor and in labours from my youth.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. "*Thou that sittest upon the cherubim shine forth . . . stir up thy might and come to save us.*" (Ps. lxxix, 1.)

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER
THE DIVINE INFANT IN THE MANGER

(Read Heb. x, 4–10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the first act of the Divine Child, directly He was born, was to raise His mind and His heart to heaven. It was to thank His beloved Father that it had been His good pleasure that He Himself should be reduced to the state of utter abandonment and poverty in which He now found Himself: *Yea, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* (Luke x, 21.)

APPLICATION. You do not find it difficult to conform yourself to the will of God, and to give Him thanks when He caresses you and treats you with tenderness. But how hard it is to you to do so when you feel abandoned, afflicted, and without help. Learn from the Holy Babe to be resigned in times of tribulation, for this is the real mark of filial love for your Heavenly Father.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.* (Ps. cxlii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that His second act was to offer to the Divine Justice in satisfaction for your sins, and in payment of the penalties due to you, all the keen suffering which His delicate frame endured from the bitter cold of the season, the rawness of the night, the

bareness of the stable, and the absolute lack of any kind of comfort at all.

APPLICATION. Will you not then thank Him from your heart for this His great goodness? But in order that the sufferings of the Divine Infant may be of greater profit to you, accustom yourself to offer all the little troubles which each day brings, whether they come to you from the inclemency of the season, from bodily weakness, or from mental sufferings, to the Divine Justice in union with the sufferings of Jesus. They will thus be much more acceptable to the Divine Father, and of much greater merit to yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, O God our protector, and look on the face of thy Christ.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the third act of the Holy Infant was to express His readiness and desire for the death of the Cross, so far was He from resting content with His actual sufferings in the cave. He yearned to go forth with giant strides from Bethlehem to Calvary, in order to become thereon a victim in expiation for your sins.

APPLICATION. Every little suffering or small discomfort that you encounter in the place and office wherein you serve God and your neighbour, seems too heavy for you to bear, and you do your best to escape from them. Oh what coldness and ingratitude of heart! If only you thought seriously upon what Jesus Christ suffered for you, you would feel no suffering or weariness, but would only hunger and thirst to suffer still more, so as to correspond with the love of Jesus, Who was never weary of suffering for your good, so much so that when He was hanging on the Cross in an abyss of sufferings, He still cried, *I thirst.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.* (Ps. xviii, 6.)

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER

THE SCHOOL OF BETHLEHEM

The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. (Matt. viii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus, in order to work out your salvation, had no necessity of being born in such poverty or of submitting to such humiliations or such sufferings, but chose to embrace all these painful circumstances in order to become your teacher, and to show you by His own example the way of perfection. Regard then the crib of Bethlehem as your school and the manger as the pulpit of so great a Teacher. From the grotto there comes to you as heretofore from Mount Thabor the voice of the Eternal Father: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

APPLICATION. See then that you frequent this school and are attentive to the lessons of so great a Master, Who alone can make you truly learned in that knowledge which alone is necessary to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor and in labours from my youth.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how beholden you ought to be to God that you have been born in a time and place, where you can avail yourself of the teachings of this Master, so ardently longed for by the Fathers of old, and even now so little known by countless numbers of people who are outside the fold of Holy Church.

APPLICATION. How intensely ought you to thank

Him for having called you to His true Church, the real school of Jesus Christ, wherein alone you can learn the true science of the saints and evangelical perfection. How many there are, now living in the darkness of ignorance, who, if God had granted them the helps you have in attending the school, and hearing the lessons of this Divine Teacher, would have profited far more by them than you do! Are you not ashamed of your negligence? What will it avail you to have mounted the pulpits or the chairs of learning, or to have shone in other exalted positions, if you have not learned what alone can help you for eternity?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* (Ps. xxxiii, 12.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what are the most important lessons which Jesus teaches you from the crib. They are reduced to two virtues, humility and meekness. *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* (Matt. xi, 29.)

APPLICATION. Ask yourself then why these two virtues are the most necessary. Because meekness you need in adversity, humility in prosperity; meekness in bearing the annoyances and trials that come to you, whether from God or from your neighbour, but which will never be comparable with those which Jesus put up with; humility in stripping yourself of all inclination to ambition or to pride, and in living utterly submissive to the will of others. It is in the school of the Crib at Bethlehem that you must especially learn these two virtues.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The meek will he guide in judgment; the gentle he will teach his ways.* (Ps. xxiv, 9.)

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER
THE ANGELS ADORE THE DIVINE INFANT

(Read Luke ii, 8–14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that directly the Holy Child was born in the cave, there came forth a command from the Heavenly Father that all the angelic hosts should adore and acknowledge Him as their King, in order that He might be so much the more glorified and honoured by the Angels, as He had humbled Himself for the salvation of men. At once all those blessed spirits obeyed the command, and descended with great joy to worship Him as their King and their Lord, albeit they beheld Him in such lowliness not for their good but for ours.

APPLICATION. Learn thou from these angelic spirits, how with far greater fervour you ought to adore Him as you see Him humbling Himself in that manger, in order to open for you the kingdom of heaven. At least offer Him on your part the praises of those angelic choirs.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Adore him, all ye his angels.* (Ps. xcvi, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the angels at once went forth on their mission of making known the birth of Christ, rejoicing to glorify their Lord and ours, and to co-operate in the salvation of men, which Jesus was to accomplish at the cost of such bitter sufferings.

APPLICATION. Doubtless in the quiet of your chamber and in the time of your prayer, you fail not to worship the Divine Infant and to offer to Him the tribute of your tenderest affections. But this is not enough. You must imitate the example of the Angels, and strive to promote His glory by inspiring in the

hearts of others a true devotion to the Infant Jesus, by dious discourses and in every way that your state of life permits. For he who truly loves Jesus cannot but pesire that He should be known and loved by all.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him all ye people.* (Ps. cxvi, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Angels bore such joyous tidings not to the learned, for they were proud, nor to the rich, because of their avarice, nor to the noble, as being lovers of their ease and of pleasures, but only to the poor and simple shepherds as they watched their sheep in the cold of the night. These were the ones who were favoured by the Angels and who were most dear to heaven. How different are God's judgments from those of the world!

APPLICATION. Rejoice then to be numbered among the poor of Christ, and so be filled with pity for, not envy of, the prosperous ones of this world. If you also would be specially privileged and favoured by heaven, do also like those good shepherds, keep watch over your animal passions; for little will it avail us even to be poor in this world's goods if we permit our sensual and disorderly appetites to rule over us.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I had rather be despised in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of sinners.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.)

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF DECEMBER
THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM
(Read Luke ii, 8–14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY in what way the birth of Christ was made known to the shepherds by the Angels. First they were surrounded by a bright light and seized by a great fear: *the brightness of God shone round about*

them, and they feared with a great fear. Such is the way in which Almighty God ordinarily prepares souls to receive special favours. He illuminates their intellect with a bright light, and at the same time awakens in their heart a deep reverence and a salutary fear. In the next place, great joy was announced to the shepherds at the birth of the Saviour of the world.

APPLICATION. There is indeed great cause for joy when Jesus is born spiritually in a heart. What however will the joys of this solemnity avail you, unless the Holy Infant be born in your heart by love and by grace?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation; I will sing unto the Lord, who hath given me good things.* (Ps. xii, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what the sign was that was given to the shepherds so that they might find the Divine Infant: *You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.* You will find a child clad in the poorest of garments, lying where is set the food of animals.

APPLICATION. Observe also you the safe way and the surest signs of finding Jesus, namely humility, poverty, mortification. If you seek Him by other ways, those of ambition, of comforts, of attachment, of this world's goods, you need not hope ever to find Jesus. But if you exercise yourself in those virtues, there will be certain signs of the Holy Infant being born within you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the song the angels sang when they appeared to the shepherds: *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.* Thus

they proclaimed the end which our Lord had set Himself in coming into the world, namely, the glory of God and the good of mankind.

APPLICATION. This too is the object you also should have in view in your life and all your work. All you do, and all you are, should be directed to the glory of God, reserving to yourself nothing of what belongs by right to God, *To God alone be honour and glory*. You should moreover seek for peace with God through the pardon of your sins, peace with yourself by the subjection of the flesh to the spirit, peace with your neighbour by unfeigned and real charity. Finally, this peace is not so much for men of great intellect, or natural gifts, as for men of good will who strive to conform themselves to the example set them by Jesus, and to imitate the virtues taught us in His birth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory.* (Ps.cxiii, 9.)

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF DECEMBER
THE SHEPHERDS AT THE CAVE OF BETHLEHEM

(Read Luke ii, 15–20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the shepherds directly they heard the joyful tidings hastened all together to Bethlehem, to see the new-born Saviour, not waiting for the dawn of day, nor fearing to leave their flocks in the darkness of the night. See herein a noble correspondence with the inspirations and invitations of heaven which call you to seek and to find your Lord.

APPLICATION. When you receive such lights or feel in your heart such inspirations, you at once stop to think of the inconvenience this act of virtue may cause you, or the fatal blow it may inflict on your passions or

the lessening of your reputation or the loss of some other good you value. And so it is that the invitation passes by unheeded. Learn from the shepherds promptly to accept the call, without paying the slightest attention to the difficulties, or to human respect, as you have done hitherto.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.* (Ps. cvii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the shepherds when they entered that cave, and saw there the Holy Child lying between two animals with the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph at His side, were marvellously enlightened so as to recognise the Child, Who seemed so poor and so abandoned, as the true Messiah, and the Saviour of the world, as Him Who had been so often promised by heaven, and so long desired by His chosen people. Consequently they adored Him with most tender affections of reverence and of love, and thanked Him for having condescended to such humiliation for their common salvation.

APPLICATION. Do you also enter that cave not indeed with your bodily feet, but with the affections of your heart. Join the shepherds in adoring Him, and you also will be enlightened.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come ye to him and be enlightened.* (Ps. xxxiii, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the shepherds as they came out of the cave, filled with spiritual joy, at once set about making known in their neighbourhood the birth of Christ, as the first heralds of the coming of the Son of God upon earth. Thus was verified the word of our Lord: *Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.* (Luke x, 21.)

APPLICATION. Reflect for a moment upon this, that whereas these humble shepherds recognised and adored as their Messiah the Infant Jesus in His crib, the princes and the doctors of the synagogue, notwithstanding the light of so many wonders which He so often wrought among them, knew Him not. So it is that our Lord chooses ever to reveal Himself to the humble, and to those that are little in their own esteem, rather than to the proud and to the self-satisfied. To which class do you belong?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones.* (Ps. xviii, 8.)

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER

OUR FIDELITY TO THE INFANT JESUS

Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? (John vi, 68.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that one of the chief reasons why the King of glory came down from the height of His majesty to be born in a stable in abject poverty, was to test the fidelity of those who love Him. Oh how many there are who, seeing Him lying there in a manger shivering with cold and crying, despise Him and turn their backs upon Him!

APPLICATION. Have you resolved to be His faithful friend, to stand by Him and to follow Him? Blessed indeed are you if so it be. You may rest assured that, when He returns thither whence He came He will reward you most generously. Even an earthly king whose fortunes had declined, when once returned to his royal state, rewards none more liberally than him who left him not in adversity. So will our Lord do with you, if now you are but faithful to Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes were upon the faithful of the earth that they may sit with me.* (Ps. c, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what it means to be faithful to Jesus in His state of such utter poverty and destitution. It means to put up with a similar portion and to suffer in union with Him the miseries He took upon Himself, and this in proof of your faithfulness to Him.

APPLICATION. Ask yourself what will be your future lot if now you have had no part with Him in this His poverty? Certainly you cannot aspire to the riches of His kingdom if you be not a sharer in His want and in His sufferings: *if so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.* (Rom. viii, 17.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Uphold thy servant unto good.* (Ps. cxviii, 122.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what these riches are, of which Jesus will make you partaker if you are His faithful friend in that state which He embraced at His birth. They are riches of two kinds, of time and of eternity. He will endow you in this life with the riches of His grace, which are the treasures He gives to His friends in proportion to the fidelity which they show Him. In the next life He will give you Paradise with all His wealth of glory, in order to render you eternally happy and that you may rejoice in His riches.

APPLICATION. An earthly king who returns, and after a term of exile recovers his kingdom, can at best only bestow some small portion of his kingdom upon him who has been faithful to him in his misfortunes. But if now you are faithful to Christ, He will grant you the enjoyment with Himself of His whole kingdom of which there shall be no end. And does not the pros-

pect of all this suffice to make you resolve to be His faithful friend?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, who satisfieth thy desire with good things.* (Ps. cii, 5.)

THE FIRST DAY OF JANUARY
THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

(Read Luke ii, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that on this day the Holy Child took upon Himself the mark of sinful man as son of Abraham, and the name of Jesus, which means Saviour, as Son of God. Had He not assumed the semblance of guilt by thus taking upon Himself our sins and discharging our debts with His own blood, He would not have purchased for us salvation.

APPLICATION. If you would rejoice in the fruit of His Holy Name and partake of the divine adoption, seek then to be humbled and to be treated as one that is guilty, and thus you may hope to be raised to the dignity of a child of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Attend, O Lord, unto my supplication, for I am brought very low.* (Ps. cxlii, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus in order to become your Saviour made Himself your physician and your teacher, your surety and your advocate, your captain and your shepherd, in order to free you from all the evils of guilt and of punishment, and to enrich you with all the goods of grace and of glory.

APPLICATION. Do you not then thank Him from your heart that He at the cost of so great sufferings and of so much blood, has taken this name to ensure your salvation? Then why do you not have recourse

to Him and invoke this Holy Name in all your needs and temptations, your labours and dangers, availing yourself of this name as a shield to defend you against the attacks of the enemy, as a comfort to soothe you in your labours, as a light to rescue you from dangers? *For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.* (Acts iv, 12.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Help us, O God our Saviour, and for the glory of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us.* (Ps. lxxviii, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the first time that this life-giving and most holy name, decreed by the Father, was pronounced by a human being, it came from the lips of the Blessed Virgin, who as she uttered it was overwhelmed with sweetness and with joy. All the angelic hosts too bowed down in adoration, making high festival of gladness and of triumph, proclaiming aloud how this Name was to be adored both on earth and beneath it: *In the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* (Phil. ii, 10.)

APPLICATION. Do you also humbly adore it. Love it with the tenderest and deepest affection. Strive to have it not only frequently upon your lips, but also to keep it graven upon your heart, so that all your work and all your life may be wholly directed only to the glory of Jesus your Saviour. *I will rejoice in the Lord; and I will joy in God my Jesus.* (Hab. iii, 18.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing ye to his name, for it is sweet.* (Ps. cxxxiv, 3.)

THE SECOND DAY OF JANUARY
THE CIRCUMCISION
(Read Luke ii, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, knowing that it was the will of God that the Holy Infant should be circumcised according to the law given to Abraham and his descendants, conformed themselves to the divine command, though they knew the child had no need thereof as being free from all stain of original sin. Mark well the marvellous virtue of that most holy Mother. She loved her Son most tenderly, she understood well the cruel pain that wound would inflict. Yet notwithstanding, she allowed not her tenderness to prevail, but courageously obeyed the Divine Will.

APPLICATION. What an example for you! When there is a question of obeying God, know how to rise above all tender affection for friends, for relatives and for country, and generously sacrifice to the service of God every sentiment which is merely human.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, I will be mindful of thy justice alone.* (Ps. lxx, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the pain of that wound which the Divine Child suffered. He had been endowed with a perfect intelligence, an exceedingly delicate complexion, and a most keen sensitiveness. Consequently He felt far more than others the sharp wound and the pain thereof. Moreover, He had not need of the remedy, nor was He subject to the law, but He submitted Himself to that rite and took upon Him the semblance of a sinful man, in order to bring a remedy to your miseries and your sins.

APPLICATION. You find no difficulty in submitting

to observances and to laws that cause you no inconvenience and are not contrary to your tastes. Far more difficult however is it to submit to those that chafe you and against which your pride rebels. Yet it is in these precisely, that you ought to show your love for Jesus, and to merit His grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I said: thou art my God, my lot is in thy hands* (Ps. xxx, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Jews by the act of circumcision became subject thereby to the heavy yoke of the Mosaic Law. So Jesus Christ taking upon Himself in His circumcision the sign of the guilt of our sins, subjected Himself by that act to the still heavier yoke of so many sufferings and ignominies, and of a death at once the most cruel and infamous, namely that of the cross, according to the command of His Divine Father for the redemption of mankind.

APPLICATION. Do you also offer yourself in union with the merits of this obedience of Christ to the Will of God, resigning yourself to the fatherly care He has of your whole life, and to all the dispositions of Divine Providence.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall nourish thee.* (Ps. liv, 23.)

THE THIRD DAY OF JANUARY
THE NAME OF CHRISTIAN
(Read Luke ii, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that it was not without a mysterious meaning that the name of Jesus was given to the Holy Infant, in the very act of shedding His Blood for our salvation. By this our Lord would give us to understand how little it avails to bear a name, without doing the good works that correspond to

it. For one therefore who bears the name of Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, what good purpose will that name serve unless one's actions accord with so fair a title?

APPLICATION. If therefore you would be a Christian in very truth and not in name only, you must be circumcised and put off the old man, laying aside all worldly maxims that are contrary to the maxims of Christ, and Christian perfection. *Stripping yourselves of the old man and his deeds.* (Col. iii, 9.) Enter into yourself and see what are the maxims which regulate your conduct, those of Christ, or those of the world.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have remembered thy name, O Lord, and have kept thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 55.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in order to deserve to bear the name of Christian it is not enough to lay aside the maxims and customs of the world. You must put on the livery of Jesus Christ and conform yourself to His most holy example. It was precisely for this that our Lord submitted to the rite of circumcision, in order to teach you to cut off all superfluities, to mortify your senses and your flesh, and finally to submit your proud spirit to a life of humility and of subjection: *always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.* (2 Cor. iv, 10.)

APPLICATION. If this appear too painful a path to tread, reflect how far more painful to Jesus was the example which He Himself set.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Help us, O God our Saviour, and for the glory of thy name, O Lord, deliver us.* (Ps. lxxviii, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Jesus whilst still a tender

infant was not content with bearing so many discomforts at His birth, but willed also painfully to shed His blood for your good, seeing that love never shows itself so perfectly as in suffering.

APPLICATION. If you profess to love Jesus you ought to show it by suffering willingly for love of Him all that happens to you in each day's course, desiring moreover even to shed your blood for Him, if only you might be counted by Him worthy to do so. Three several times did Jesus shed His blood for you—at His circumcision at the will of His parents, voluntarily in the Garden, in the prætorium and on Calvary at the hands of His enemies. You too must correspondingly and willingly suffer what is painful whether it comes to you from those who are over you, from yourself, or from your enemies.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would surely have given it.* (Ps. l, 18.)

THE FOURTH DAY OF JANUARY
THE STAR IN THE EAST
(Read Matt. ii, 1–2.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that as Jesus Christ came on earth for the salvation of all, so He willed to make known His birth not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. To the Jews it was by means of angels, ministers as it were of that chosen people; to the Gentiles through a star which had been foretold them by the prophet Balaam. Thus we see how truly God gives to all men and to each one in particular, the means and helps they need in their own state of life for their salvation: *who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* (1 Tim. ii, 4.)

APPLICATION. But how much more plentiful are the helps He has given to you, in comparison with those of many others who would have corresponded with them far better than you! He gave you to be born in the very heart of Christianity, and yet you do not remember to thank Him!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will sing unto the Lord who has given me good things.* (Ps. xii, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Star which heralded the birth of Christ was visible to every one in the East, but very few stopped to notice it. The wise men alone followed its lead, they being especially illuminated by an interior light, verifying thus our Lord's words *many are called, but few are chosen.* (Matt. xx, 16.)

APPLICATION. How many clear lights has God already given you in your soul? How many interior calls has He made your heart to hear inviting you to go and seek Jesus? How far have you corresponded with them? Are you then surprised to find yourself still so far away from Jesus? Sad would it have been had those wise men paid no heed to the star, or to the inspiration of God! Nor less will be your loss if you neglect the inspirations of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My people heard not my voice, and Israel hearkened not to me. So I let them go according to the desires of their heart.* (Ps. lxxx, 12–13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the generous promptitude of these holy Magi. They saw no others stir at the invitation of the star, nevertheless, heedless of such indifference, without delay and without knowing where the new King was born, they leave their country, they give up the comforts of home, and set out on

their journey in the severity of winter, fearing neither dangers nor sufferings, in order to find that Monarch Who had been made known to them by a wonderful sign in the heavens.

APPLICATION. So too should you also act whensoever our Lord calls you and invites you to undertake some enterprise for His glory, or to practise some generous act of virtue. You must not be alarmed at the difficulties and dangers which your imagination and self-love represent to you. Much less must you draw back because of the uncertainty of the issue. You must promptly obey the call of heaven, trusting that God will give you the help and the strength faithfully to accomplish what He wishes of you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my helper. It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man.* (Ps. cxvii, 7–8.)

THE FIFTH DAY OF JANUARY
THE MAGI IN JERUSALEM

(Read Matt. ii, 1–9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how these holy and wise kings having undertaken this journey without knowing where it would end, entrusted themselves to the guidance of the star. He who voyages over the high seas must needs observe the stars in order to arrive in port. Not otherwise did these wise men.

APPLICATION. Our life upon earth is as a voyage by sea beset with dangers and storms and shipwrecks. He who would sail securely must be guided by light from heaven, that is to say, by the truths of faith and by the eternal maxims which will bear him safely into harbour. Blessed then will you be if you keep your eyes fixed on stars so bright as these.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?* (Ps. xxvi, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, how as the wise men drew near to Jerusalem, the star that guided them suddenly disappeared, and they were left in doubt and in affliction. They did not in consequence give up the journey they had undertaken, but given access to the royal palace they fearlessly enquired where he was born, the new king of the Jews. By the hiding of the star God willed to prove their faith and their constancy, and at the same time give you to understand that in the way of the spiritual life, there will never be wanting desolation of soul, obscurity of mind, and trials of various kinds; these being precisely the times for you to show your fidelity, and to gain very much merit.

APPLICATION. Up to now how far faithful have you been in times of trial in maintaining your confidence in God, and in persevering in your usual exercises of piety? This is the time when one acts purely for God alone, and is therefore a time very acceptable to Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am come into the depth of the sea and a tempest hath overwhelmed me. Mine eyes have failed while I hope in my God.* (Ps. lxviii, 3–4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that when the wise men enquired as to where the new king announced by the star had been born, they learned from the priests that the place foretold by the prophets in the holy scriptures was Bethlehem. This then was amply sufficient for them to make them courageously resume their journey in that direction and without any further care or further enquiry.

APPLICATION. And in your doubts, your difficulties, your perplexities, does not the guidance of those who are placed over you, and of your spiritual fathers suffice for you? Do but follow the counsel they give you and you too will be further enlightened and comforted by God, as happened to the wise men. Here also take notice of the great blindness of the Jews, and especially of the priests. They show the way and instruct the Gentiles how to find the Messiah, yet move not a foot themselves to seek Him. Implore of God that He may never let you fall into such fatal hardness of heart and blindness of intellect.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enlighten mine eyes that I sleep not ever in death.* (Ps. xii, 4.)

THE SIXTH DAY OF JANUARY
THE EPIPHANY

(Read Matt. ii, 1–12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the consolation and ineffable joy of the Magi when they saw the star appear once more, after they had been informed by the priests as to the place where the Christ was to be born. And so it happens to those, who remain faithful and constant in time of desolation letting themselves be directed by their spiritual guides. But how much greater must have been the wonder of the Magi when they saw the star standing over a poor wretched hut, and pointing out the place where was born the King, proclaimed from above.

APPLICATION. Whosoever then would find Jesus must not seek Him amidst comforts and in grandeur, for He is only to be found in humility and in poverty.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Incline thine ear, O*

Lord, and hear me, for I am needy and poor. (Ps. lxxxv, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that when they crossed the threshold of the cave, it at once appeared to the eyes of their souls as an abode more splendid and striking than any royal palace. Whosoever finds Jesus in humility and in poverty discovers how precious these virtues are. By the rays of glory which emanated from the Holy Babe, and still more by the interior light which illuminated their souls, they knew Him to be in very truth the King of the Jews and the true Son of God. Prostrating themselves therefore in body and with profoundest sentiments of humility of soul, most profoundly did they adore Him with divine worship, and with tender affections of devotion and of love.

APPLICATION. If only a bright ray of light and of faith did but illuminate your soul and make known to you your Lord Who, becoming little in the Sacred Host, so constantly enters into your bosom, with how much greater reverence would you receive and adore Him! At least unite with the holy kings in offering to Him all the affections of your heart.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct me in thy truth and teach me, for thou art God, my Saviour.* (Ps. xxiv, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Magi, not content with worshipping the Child Jesus, offer to Him also precious gifts of gold, of myrrh, and of incense, thus mystically confessing Him true king by their gold, mortal man by their myrrh, and eternal God by their incense. But how far more liberally were they rewarded by our Saviour for these their offerings, receiving as we may well believe the gift of wisdom for their

gold, the gift of perfect purity and of great increase in grace for their myrrh, and intense spiritual consolations for their incense.

APPLICATION. It is not enough that you should worship Jesus with sentiments or affections alone. You must confess Him in your life and by your deeds. Renew from the depths of your heart the offerings of the gold of your love, the myrrh of mortification and of self-conquest, the incense of prayer and devotion. If you are faithful in your promises to the Infant Jesus, He will not be out-done in generosity, but will give Himself in all His fullness to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All the kings of the earth shall adore him: all nations shall do him service.* (Ps. lxxi, 11.)

THE SEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY
RETURN OF THE MAGI
(Read Matt. ii, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what great consolations the holy wise men had during that night, which they passed in the presence of the Divine Child, as He spoke silently to their hearts, and as they listened to the Blessed Virgin explaining to them the hidden mysteries of redemption. How little they then thought of the discomforts of their journey. Sweet is all fatigue endured in the search of Jesus by those, who have the joy of finding Him, and they never weary of His divine presence.

APPLICATION. Do you also stay willingly with the Holy Child? Do you also rejoice in conversing with Him and with His Holy Mother? That is the surest sign that you have found Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let all the kings of*

the earth give glory unto thee, O Lord, for they have heard all the words of thy mouth. (Ps. cxxxvii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the wise men being in doubt as to whether or not they should fulfil their promise to Herod and return to Jerusalem, had recourse to God in order that He should make known to them His Divine holy Will. Then by means of an angel they were bidden in their sleep to return to their home by another way, so as not to imperil the life of the Holy Infant.

APPLICATION. See here the surest way of a solution in all your doubts, namely to have recourse to God for light, at the same time to avail yourself of all the means which human prudence may dictate, taking counsel of wise and experienced persons. God does not wish to do all of Himself, but requires that we on our side should co-operate with Him. But your trust must above all be in the fatherly care of God. If you act thus our Lord will always show you, as He did the wise men, the surest way of escaping all dangers.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord ruleth me and I shall want nothing.* (Ps. xxii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that when they had been told from heaven to change their road, they made no account of the greater length or difficulties of the journey, nor of the promise which they had made to Herod of returning to Jerusalem. Consequently, those wise men after they had found and adored Jesus, returned by another way into their own country.

APPLICATION. You also when God or your superiors show you the way that you must follow, learn to pay no heed to human respect or to worldly reasonings, and to fear no difficulties that may present

themselves. You may be always sure of walking with perfect safety when the Will of God is your guide. Like the Magi too, return you also by another road after having made a complete offering of yourself to the Divine Babe. When you came you were proud, return now by the path of humility; you were passionate and easily angered, return now by meekness and mildness; you ran after vanities and the goods of this world, embrace now the poverty of the Gospel and seek only true goods which are those of heaven: *This is the way that leadeth to life.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my helper and my protector; my heart hath trusted in him and I have been helped.* (Ps. xxvii, 7.)

THE EIGHTH DAY OF JANUARY
MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

(Read Matt. ii, 16–18.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Herod who had been troubled by the report of the new-born King, became maddened with fury at finding himself deceived by the wise men. Consequently in order to make sure that his kingdom should not be taken from him, he determined to have all the male infants of Bethlehem put to death, without a moment's thought as to so barbarous an injustice or so horrible a massacre of so many innocent children. Such was the precipice into which this tyrant's mad ambition for rule cast him.

APPLICATION. How many there are who for something far less than a kingdom have descended to unjust and unworthy actions, one through ambition of place, another through jealousy or rivalry against an enemy. Examine yourself and see what unconquered passion

prevails most of all within you. Strive to overcome it by mortification and frequent prayer to God, so that it may not prove your ruin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enlighten mine eyes, that I sleep not ever in death, lest mine enemy say at any time: I have prevailed against him.* (Ps. xii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Herod in order to be quite certain of killing the new King of the Jews, gave orders for the massacre of not only all the infants who were born in Bethlehem at the time of the star, but also of all those born in the outskirts and vicinity of Bethlehem, *from two years old and under in all the borders thereof.* By such means and by such precautions Herod thought still to keep his kingdom in his wickedness, yet gained not the end he had in view because *there is no wisdom and no counsel against God.*

APPLICATION. And ought not you to adopt similar precautions, in order to make sure of the eternal kingdom which is prepared for you in heaven, by attacking and destroying not only whatever passion most predominates in you, but also any others that may in course of time arise within you, and deprive you of so glorious a kingdom!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold thine enemies, O Lord, behold thine enemies shall perish, and all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.* (Ps. xcii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what a scene of horror it was to behold the tears of so many sorrowing mothers, and the blood of so many innocent children most cruelly murdered by that tyrant, who even in this life suffered the chastisement of God by a most painful death. On the other hand consider how Almighty God made use of Herod's ambition in order to crown

those infants in the glory of heaven, and also to make more clearly known upon earth the birth of the true Messiah.

APPLICATION. Learn to recognise in the evils which befall you or others the loving providence of God. If an enemy tries to injure you, God so disposes that it turns to your greater profit and to His greater glory, so true it is that whoever plots evil against his neighbour works ruin for himself and crowns for others.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O grant us help in trouble, for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do mightily, he will bring our enemies to nought.* (Ps. cvii, 13–14.)

THE NINTH DAY OF JANUARY
FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

(Read Matt. ii, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the Heavenly Father in order to save the life of the Infant Jesus from Herod's snares, sends an angel to warn His parents to withdraw Him from danger by flight. Almighty God could have freed Him from danger in many other ways, without exposing Him to so much suffering and discomfort, but He did not will to do so.

APPLICATION. Hence we may learn the special care God takes of His most favoured servants, not only when He caresses and comforts them, but also when He tries them with persecutions and trials as He did His beloved Son.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver Him; I will protect him because he hath known my name.* (Ps. xc, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Angel's warning was

delivered to St. Joseph as head of the family, and that the Blessed Mother took it not amiss to be as it were passed over in favour of him who was so far inferior to her. She knew full well that God chooses to make known to us His will through the medium of those whom He has placed over us, even though they be of less merit or learning or virtue.

APPLICATION. Learn once for all this truth, that when you would be certain of God's will you must follow the advice of your spiritual guide and the orders of your superior, although it may seem to you that in many ways you know better than they. This is the way by which God wishes to lead you along the sure path of salvation.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct me in thy truth and teach me; for thou art God my Saviour.* (Ps. xxiv, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the circumstances of this flight ordered by the Angel. Joseph as he sleeps is told to cut short his needful repose, to start on this journey at midnight, to go not to a friendly country such as would have been that of the three kings, but to the hostile and barbarous land of Egypt, and there to stay till he received further commands. In spite of circumstances so trying, St. Joseph hesitated not to obey with promptitude of will, and with entire submission of his own judgment, happy in fulfilling the Divine Will.

APPLICATION. Examine your manner of obeying, and see how you act when you are ordered something which disturbs your peace and obliges you to leave a place you like and to live perhaps in discomfort, unknown and uncared for. Learn that in proportion to the generosity with which you give yourself up to

the obedience of those who are over you, the more apt instrument will you become to do great things for God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 124.)

THE TENTH DAY OF JANUARY
EXILE IN EGYPT
(Read Matt. ii, 13–15.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how much Jesus and His parents suffered during their long sojourn of seven years in Egypt. They lived quite unknown and in extreme poverty in that heathen land, and no one offered the needed help to that holy family. Hence St. Joseph had to obtain their necessary sustenance by the labour of his hands and the sweat of his brow.

APPLICATION. Such was the condition to which the King of glory reduced Himself for your sake. When have you ever had to suffer such poverty either in the course of God's Providence or by the commands of superiors? At least, seek not superfluities in God's service. What happiness did not the good St. Joseph find in his labours to maintain and save the life of Jesus. You too must find comfort in the labours you undertake for God's service and say with the Apostle: *I suffer but I am not discouraged.* (2 Tim. i, 12.) If you have Jesus with you as Joseph had, no work will be hard to you, nor will you find it difficult to live in the poorest corner of the world.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I fear no evils, for thou art with me.* (Ps. xxii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how, amidst so many trials, nothing so much distressed that holy family as the

blindness and impiety of that barbarous nation which worshipped the devil in their idols. They did not however weary of helping those poor idolaters by their holy words and their devout example.

APPLICATION. If there were in your heart true zeal for God's honour, you would feel more for the offences against Him than for your own interests. He who has at heart the glory of God and the salvation of souls endeavours in all places, at all times and in all conditions of life to benefit his neighbour. If you go not as far as this, at least strive never to be a stumbling-block or bad example to others.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My zeal hath made me to pine away; because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.* (Ps. cxviii, 139.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the idols of that land of Egypt fell to the ground in presence of Jesus, it not being possible for those false gods to stand unmoved in the sight of the true God.

APPLICATION. How can the idols of your heart remain unmoved in your heart, when your God takes sacramental possession of it? As many as are the evil affections of pride, of anger, of inordinate love of your own reputation and ease which you cultivate, so many are the idols which reign in your heart. How comes it that these idols do not fall to the ground when Jesus enters the Egypt of your heart, Who humbles Himself so exceedingly under the sacramental species, Who bears so many outrages and Who comes not to save His own life from the snares of Herod, but to rescue you from eternal death and to give you a life of everlasting happiness?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is great and highly to be praised; he is to be feared above all*

gods; for all the gods of the Gentiles are devils. (Ps. xcv, 4–5.)

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY
THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

(Read Luke ii, 42–50.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the Child Jesus went up according to the custom of the Jews to the temple for the great feast, and there remained unknown to His parents in order to teach you two important lessons. The first is that of being exact and careful in the observance of all prescribed customs which concern the honour of God, even though they be not of obligation. Christ was not so bound on account of His tender age, but He wished to give this good example in order that you might not neglect to do the same with regard to others. The second lesson is to teach you that where there is a question of God's honour, you must not yield for a moment to human respect.

APPLICATION. Our Blessed Lord could never have feared that His parents would have interfered with His *long stay* in the temple. Nevertheless He remained there secretly to the intense grief of His Mother and of St. Joseph, because He knew well what a serious hindrance it would be for you to make known to your friends and relatives those things you intend to do for the service of God. Consequently, He would have you learn from this His example, not to be afraid of giving displeasure even to those who are most dear to you, when it is a question of giving pleasure to God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 57.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph on their return from the temple, seeing that the Divine Child was missing, feared that this had happened through some fault of their own. So in their bitter grief they set themselves to seek Him till at last they found Him on the third day.

APPLICATION. Even now also is Jesus wont to hide Himself from those who return and leave the temple, that is, from those who go back in His divine service by omitting their customary devotions and penances, neglecting their regular duties and thinking little of deliberate venial sins. He hides Himself by depriving them of His lights, His consolations and of His timely help, and so in their unhappy state they go from bad to worse. Woe then to you were you ever to become such a one as these, but woe all the more, did you not by repentance for your negligence diligently seek to find Him again.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In the day of my trouble I sought God.* (Ps. lxxvi, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY where Jesus was found. Not among His relatives nor among His friends, but in the temple and among the Doctors.

APPLICATION. Is Jesus hidden from you? If you would find Him seek Him in the temple, seek Him among the Doctors. In the temple by withdrawing yourself from unnecessary conversation, by treating more closely with God in prayer, by keeping more recollected and more watchful over yourself. Seek Him among the Doctors by reading holy books, and by going to your confessor or spiritual director to be guided in the way of finding Jesus. You must also have special recourse to the Blessed Virgin and to St. Joseph, that they may obtain for you the grace of

finding Him so securely as never to lose Him any more.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In thy fear I will worship towards thy holy temple, and give glory to thy name.* (Ps. cxxxvii, 2.)

THE TWELFTH DAY OF JANUARY
HIDDEN LIFE AT NAZARETH
(Read Luke ii, 51–52.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus remained up to the age of thirty years in the little house and shop at Nazareth. He grew not only in years but also in the most holy example He gave *before God and men*, of piety and zeal towards His Father, and of charity and meekness towards His neighbours.

APPLICATION. As your years in life lengthen out, do you also grow in devotion and union with God, in charity and meekness towards your neighbour? Please God you be not of those rather who go back and as they advance in years neglect prayer and regular observance, who seek after greater liberty and ease and thus endanger even the salvation of their souls.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have sworn and am steadfastly purposed to keep the judgments of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 106.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what was the occupation of Jesus during all those years. *He was subject to them*, obeying His Mother and St. Joseph in all things they commanded Him. This He did in order to teach you that the perfection of virtue does not consist in the quality of the work one has to do, but in the perfection of the obedience with which he carries out the orders of those whom God has placed over him. It is this

obedience which supernaturalises all his actions, even to the least of them, and renders them exceedingly precious in the eyes of God.

APPLICATION. You also can render all your actions still more precious by offering them to your Heavenly Father, in union with the merits of those in which Jesus was occupied in obedience up to the age of thirty years.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set me, O Lord, a law in thy way, and guide me in the right path.* (Ps. xxvi, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY in what manner Jesus accomplished all the smallest things that were commanded Him. He did everything, with that same love and for that same end of glorifying His Father and meriting our salvation, as He showed later in preaching or when He offered Himself a sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary, a victim of expiation for our sins.

APPLICATION. If you wish to arrive quickly at true holiness try always to do God's will in the smallest thing that is commanded you by obedience, as He wills and for what end He wills. In this consists all your perfection. God in all His works, even the smallest, acts always for the very best, because He does them all according to His most perfect will, according to the perfect exemplar in the Divine mind, and only for the most perfect end of His glory. You by doing what God wills of you, as He wills and for the end He wills, will so be doing what is for the very best.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *That I should do Thy will: O my God, I have desired it.* (Ps. xxxix, 9.)

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY
BAPTISM OF JESUS

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan, unto John, to be baptised by him. (Matt. iii, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus Christ before He began to preach the gospel and to spread among the people the light of His heavenly doctrine, went first to the Jordan to be baptised among the publicans and sinners by His precursor, John the Baptist. He would perform this act of extreme humility as a preparation for the great work of our redemption, thus publicly declaring Himself a sinful man like the rest.

APPLICATION. And you when you have some work to do for God's service, whether it be in preaching, or in mission work or the like, be careful to prepare yourself by study and all the means you think useful for the end you have in view. Remember however that the best preparation of all is that which Jesus teaches you by His example of humility. You must not neglect the means that human prudence dictates, but most of all you must humble yourself and honestly acknowledge before God your incapacity, imploring Him to grant you that aid which He bestows so generously upon the humble, but which He refuses to the proud who presume on themselves.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou wilt save the humble people, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud.* (Ps. xvii, 28.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how St. John, perceiving by a revelation of the Holy Spirit that it was the Redeemer Who came to him, rejoiced exceedingly to know Him and with the greatest humility adored him. But learning that He came to be baptised by him, he ceased not to refuse until Jesus said to him: *Suffer it*

to be so now : for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice.

APPLICATION. It was as if Jesus had said : By my humiliation in appearing as a sinful man, and by your obedience in giving Me baptism, all justice will be fulfilled, because in obedience and humility all other virtue is made perfect. What value have you yourself set hitherto upon these two virtues so precious ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast regarded my humiliation ; thou hast saved my soul out of distresses.* (Ps. xxx, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Christ by being Himself baptised instituted the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Consequently at that very moment the heavens were opened above Him, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and the Father declared Him to be His Beloved Son. It was to teach us thereby that this sacrament of Baptism by cleansing us from sin opens to us the Kingdom of Heaven, draws down upon us the Holy Spirit with His gifts, and raises us to the dignity of adopted sons of the Divine Father.

APPLICATION. How comes it that you thank Him so little for so great a benefit of which so large part of mankind is deprived ? How far do you remember to correspond to the debt of gratitude you owe ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.* (Ps. l, 14.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF CANA

(Read John ii, 1–11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the promptness, with which the Blessed Virgin provided for the lack of wine at the marriage feast at Cana even though unasked.

Hence you may infer her far greater solicitude and readiness in providing for the spiritual needs of each one, ever since her divine Son declared her as she stood beneath the cross to be the Mother of us all. As our Mother then, her eyes are ever bent upon our needs, her heart is always sympathising with them, her hands ever relieving them with all a Mother's tenderness.

APPLICATION. If this be so, why have you not recourse to her in all your wants with reverence and with filial trust? How many benefits and graces has she gained for you even without your asking? Do you doubt then that she will help you when you ask her for things that are necessary for your salvation?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come ye, children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* (Ps. xxxiii, 12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Blessed Virgin is ever powerful, and ready to obtain for you help and graces from heaven. When at the marriage feast of Cana she asked Jesus to provide for the wine that failed, He answered her shortly, saying that His hour for working miracles was not yet arrived, *My hour is not yet come.* Nevertheless the fervour of her prayer so prevailed with Him that He anticipated that hour and changed the water into wine. How much more powerful will be the prayers she now makes for us to her Son, seated as she is at His right hand, Queen of heaven, proclaimed as treasuress of the divine bounties, directress of His mercies and the guardian of the salvation of all men. *He has so willed that all should come to us through Mary,* says the glorious St. Bernard.

APPLICATION. If then her power be so great and such be her readiness to do us good, why do you doubt that you will be heard through her intercession?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *On thy right hand stood the queen, in golden raiment, wrought about with variety.* (Ps. xliv, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the words the Blessed Virgin spoke to the servants in order to obtain from her Divine Son this miraculous gift: *Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.* Do you also exactly as Jesus commands you and you will have all the graces you need.

APPLICATION. Imagine then that she says to you: If you would that my prayers for you should be efficacious, see that you fulfil all that our Lord requires of you as of one of His faithful followers. For as the merits and prayers which Jesus as your advocate offers for you to the Father will not suffice for your salvation without your own co-operation, so neither without the same will avail you the prayers which the Blessed Virgin offers for you. Often have recourse to our Blessed Lady in your needs, but if you be not heard the fault is yours because you neglect things which would make your prayers efficacious.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. I will hearken what the Lord shall say within me.* (Ps. lxxxiv, 8–9.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

TIME AND ETERNITY

Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow. (Matt. vi, 33–34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how wholesome a thought it is seriously to dwell upon the past that has already gone by, and of the eternal years that are yet to come.

This is perhaps the most useful thought that can occupy your mind. As you think of the days gone by, you will see with what speed they have slipped away, and of the eternal years you will remember that they will never end.

APPLICATION. O what a salutary thought is this! Let it then be often in your mind. Examine yourself and see whether hitherto you have sufficiently dwelt upon it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years.* (Ps. lxxvi, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY why this thought will be so greatly to your profit. It is because in thinking of the past you will learn to have a greater esteem for eternity, while the reflection on the eternal years will show you how little you should esteem those days that have already passed so quickly away, and those few that still remain to you in this life. If you would truly know of how little worth is all that passes away, compare it with that which never changes, saying to yourself: Were I still to live for more than a hundred or a thousand years, what would that be in comparison with eternity? It would be even as nothing. If on the contrary you would value eternity aright, compare it with the past, and say within yourself that when millions and millions of years have gone by they will still begin again and thus will never end.

APPLICATION. How on the one hand can I prefer those few years of life that remain to me to the unending years of eternity, or on the other how esteem of less account that good which will never end than one that perishes so quickly?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *A thousand years in*

thy sight are but as yesterday which is past. (Ps. lxxxix, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, speaking precisely, the time of our life here has no present; it has only a past and a future. It is like the flowing waters of a river that swiftly follow one another. We can say this of mortal life: *We all die and like waters that return no more we fall down into the earth.* (2 Kings xiv, 14.) Our life is more rapid than any stream. The moment you call the present has already become the past.

APPLICATION. Now see to what a narrow span is reduced that time or life you call your own. To a moment only, or a single point: for the past no longer lies within your power, the future you know not how it will be with you. In eternity alone is found the true present which never passes away and which will never end. Think then seriously whether it be better to rejoice in this short life and to suffer then for all eternity, or to rejoice for ever in eternity and suffer a little while in the present life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man is like to vanity; his days pass away as a shadow.* (Ps. cxliii, 4.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

LIFE ON EARTH A PILGRIMAGE

Lay not up to yourselves treasures upon earth. (Matt. vi, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that men live in this world either as citizens thereof, or as strangers, or as pilgrims. If as citizens only, they are those weak Christians who recognise no other country except this world, and live as did the Gentiles, *who had no hope.* If as strangers, they are those who recognise perfectly

that heaven is their country and aspire to it, but yet in the meantime are far more occupied with the things of this world than with those of the next. If as pilgrims, they are those who recognise heaven as their come and aspire to it, desiring to have here upon earth holy what is needful for them from day to day.

APPLICATION. Ask yourself to which of these three classes you belong. As a true follower of Jesus Christ you should undoubtedly live here as a pilgrim, often reminding yourself of the word of St. Paul: *We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come.* (Heb. xiii, 14.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that he who would live as a stranger, and still more as a pilgrim upon earth, even as he must keep himself from desires of earthly things such as great possessions and reputation, so too must he refrain himself from all *carnal desires*, for these above all make us live as if we were bound down to this world and darken the intellect by making us lose all thought of things to come. *I beseech you*, says St. Peter, *as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul.* (1 Pet. ii, 11.)

APPLICATION. Lay home to yourselves these words of the Apostle. Observe well that he is insistent that we should abstain not only from the deeds of the flesh but also from all dangerous desires. It is a danger that must be met in its very beginnings, for such desires have often their origin in some reading from sheer curiosity, in an unguarded remark, or in some thought which is not checked at once. Of one spark cometh a great fire. (Ecclus. xi, 34.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts; quicken thou me in thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 40.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Apostle does not bid his disciples be altogether free from such desires, but to restrain them, for few there are even among the holiest entirely exempt from such. This much however is necessary, that as soon as ever evil thoughts arise within the soul, we must chase them away, resist them, and avoid the danger by flight, and by turning our thoughts elsewhere. They are more easily conquered by flight than by fight.

APPLICATION. Examine how far you avoid all occasions of evil, by keeping a watch over your senses, and by mortifying the body, for here is the chief source whence come all our evil desires. *Whence come,* asks the Apostle St. James, *wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence from your concupiscences, which war in your members?* (James iv, 1.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

TEPIDITY

No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God. (Luke ix, 62.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the tepidity which is so displeasing to God is not that of the man who, abandoning the coldness of a bad life, is about to pass to the warmth of a well-regulated one, but it is the tepidity of one who, leaving his first fervour, goes back from the warmth of a devout life to the coldness of a tepid one. It is a lesser evil, at least in its conse-

quences, not to have known the service of God or embraced it, than having once known and entered upon it with fervour, then to neglect it; he who does so will always go from worse to worse, until at last he perishes. A vessel of water once heated when removed from the fire becomes little by little entirely cold.

APPLICATION. You also if you leave the fire of your first fervour by neglecting your prayers, giving up self-denial and little occasions of mortification, omitting your regular observances, will gradually go from bad to worse, and make yourself displeasing to God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, they that depart from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that are faithless to thee.* (Ps. lxxii, 27.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY why this tepidity of one who goes from hot to cold is so displeasing to God. The reason is because for one who till now has not embraced the better thing, because he knew it not, it is no great matter for surprise if God shows him great mercy, by then drawing him on to great fervour of spirit. But as for one who has abandoned God's service after having embraced it, what claim can he have on our Blessed Saviour's mercy? Many sinners have become great saints, but how few are those who have fallen away and then returned to the ways of holiness, seeing that when a habit is once lost, ordinarily there is never more a return to it.

APPLICATION. What wonder is it that God would rather you had remained cold as you were before your conversion, than that you should become tepid by falling away from Him? If by tepidity you begin to forsake the friendship of God, He will banish you from His heart.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God remembered that they are flesh, a wind that goeth and returneth not.* (Ps. lxxvii, 39.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what this rejection by God with which He threatens your tepidity means. It consists in His no longer having the same loving care of you that He had at first, nor visiting you with His sweet spiritual consolations, allowing you to be overcome by weariness, by sadness, by temptations, and finally delivering you up to a reprobate sense, as St. Paul says (Rom. i, 28), which invariably leads to perdition. And all this comes to pass by little and little.

APPLICATION. If then our Lord has not yet entirely cast you off, as certainly He has not, repent without delay, and renew your resolution of serving Him well, and renew your fervour, for He says, I will *begin* to cast thee off, in order to give you time so to act now, that He may never again have reason to reject you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I said : Now have I begun ; this change is of the right hand of the Most High.* (Ps. lxxvi, 11.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

DIVINE CONSOLATION

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. (John xiv, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that there is the same difference between heavenly consolations and earthly delights as there was between the manna from heaven and the fruits of the earth. The manna was for its excellence called angels' food, because it gave strength to the Hebrew people and preserved them from sickness,

affording them the sweetness of every taste. *Serving every man's will it was turned to what every man liked.* (Wisdom xvi, 21.) Thus they wished not to seek for other food.

APPLICATION. Heavenly consolations are like this manna, for they too are angelic food which keeps the soul in health, and imparts a sweetness that surpasses all other, so much so that he who has once experienced it will care for no other joy. The consolations of this world, on the contrary, are a food that is common to all creatures. They not only do not prevent bodily and spiritual ills but often cause them, and in spite of all their variety of tastes can never satisfy us. Which of these two consolations seems to you the more desirable? The manna was given to the Hebrews in place of the food of Egypt, of which they deprived themselves in order to follow their God into the desert. These heavenly consolations are only given to him who denies himself earthly delights in order to serve God. Consequently if you wish to enjoy in abundance the relish of heavenly things, cast away entirely that which is of earth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* (Ps. xciii, 19.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the manna failed the Hebrews directly they began to eat of the fruits of the land. So too our Lord is accustomed to withdraw His consolations from one who begins to turn back to the empty delights of the world.

APPLICATION. When God called you to come out of the Egypt of the world to a devout and to a higher life, He so strengthened and comforted you with consolation and hope, that cheerfully you renounced the world and its pleasures. If then you no longer

enjoy those consolations, the fault is your own, because you have strayed after earthly delights. God will not give you to taste of His royal table if you seek for your food amid the pleasures of sense.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me.* (Ps. xxii, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that our Lord sometimes leaves the soul, in order to prove and to sanctify her, deprived of all consolations and even the prey of severe trial: *He hath filled me with bitterness.* (Lam. iii, 15.) But generally this does not last for long. God then compensates us interiorly with a comfort less sweet perhaps but more substantial, like the bread of Elias baked under the ashes. This His remedy so replete with lively faith and certain hope, comforts more than all earthly pleasures. Whosoever tastes and sees how precious is the gift, would not exchange it for all the delights the world can offer.

APPLICATION. Learn then to despise pleasures of earth or sense, if you desire that God should grant you to taste of the sweetness of His manna or of that still more substantial food, the consolations of His grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure.* (Ps. xxxv, 9.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JESUS CHRIST OUR SURETY

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. (Luke xxiii, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus Christ has in His intense mercy and love for you become your surety. When He saw you eternally lost because of

your utter inability to satisfy the divine justice, He offered Himself in your stead to become your surety, to pay all the debts you had contracted with God, nay to cancel them by so many humiliations and so many sufferings, even to the outpouring of His most Precious Blood. He was nowise bound to bestow so immense a benefit; He was moved to it solely by His goodness and mercy. *He delivered the poor man for whom there was no helper.* (Job xxix, 12.)

APPLICATION. If then your heart retains any sense of true gratitude, *forget not the kindness of your surety.* (Ecclus. xxix, 19.) Be no longer unmindful as you have hitherto been of so loving a Benefactor.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord hath heard and hath had mercy upon me; the Lord hath become my helper.* (Ps. xxix, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that among men, all who go surety for a friend, do so in the confidence that the friend will do his best to pay the debt or because they hope to be made good the sum put down. If before becoming surety they foresaw that it never would be repaid, then they would not bind themselves to so great a favour. Jesus alone is a surety who took upon Himself our debts, knowing for certain that on Himself would devolve the payment. He offered Himself to the rigorous justice of His Father for a debtor so unutterably poor as to be incapable of ever repaying the debt.

APPLICATION. Reflect then how He has become not only your surety, but has laid down far more than an equivalent of your debt, in order so to encourage you and to render the way of salvation easy for you. Do you not then feel bound in strictest justice to

correspond to the utmost of your power with the goodness of so loving a surety and so kind a benefactor?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits who redeemeth thy life from destruction.* (Ps. cii, 2 and 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how you in turn must act. Even as a poor debtor towards a friend who has satisfied and paid all his securities for him, so must you do. You must recognise the benefit, acknowledge it, render thanks for it, and strive to make the best return you may. Seeing that Christ has poured out for you an ocean of tears and of blood, will you not shed at least one tear for Him in return? If Christ has borne for you so many insults and outrages, are you not willing for His sake to put up with some small ridicule or slight? If Christ went so far as to die for you on the tree of the Cross, will you not live your life for Him?

APPLICATION. Resolve then to live for Christ, try to please Him, and to work for His greater glory so as never to appear ungrateful to your surety, *Who loved you and delivered Himself for you.* (Gal. ii, 20.) This He did in order to rescue you from terrible and eternal evils, and at the same time to enable you to rejoice in blessings without end through all eternity. God grant that you may never be one of those who turn their backs upon Him: *He that is of an unthankful mind will leave Him that delivered Him.* (Ecclus. xxix, 21.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To him my soul shall live.* (Ps. xxi, 31.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JESUS CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

I am the light of the world; he that followeth me walketh not in darkness. (John viii, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus Christ came into the world in order to rescue men from the darkness of intellectual error and from the rebellion of the will, by raising them up into the admirable light of His divine teaching, and of true virtues. Few however there are who profit by this divine light, because many resolutely close their eyes against it, as unbelievers who are *rebellious to the light* (Job xxiv, 13), and as many even among the faithful who accept the light of faith so far as to believe, but do not accept the light of the commandments in order to good works and the fulfilment of their duty.

APPLICATION. Would to God that among so-called Christians, followers of Christ, there were none of these lovers of darkness, who keep the windows of their soul barred against the light so that they may not see the obligations of their state of life or of their duties, nor feel the sting of their conscience. Such indeed are in danger of eternal death, for not only are they in darkness, but they rest and repose in the same. *They sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The words of his mouth are iniquity and guile; he would not understand that he might do well.* (Ps. xxxv, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that among Christians there are others again, who keep the windows of their soul neither altogether closed nor yet wholly open to the

light. They desire the light, but yet not too much thereof, thinking they cannot correspond. They are in fact of those who love the light, but love the darkness better—*They loved darkness rather than the light.* (John iii, 19.) Such as these neglect to have frequent recourse to God, in order to be enlightened by Him, neglect the reading of good books, waste their time in needless diversion and in useless conversation.

APPLICATION. If you be one of these, see what great wrong you do to God and what great harm you do yourself, for God wants to give you His light only to lead you without stumbling along the way of salvation, as without it you cannot follow it either clearly or safely.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct my way in thy sight.* (Ps. v, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the happiness of those who keep the windows of their soul open to the Divine Sun. They know that all the good they can do will be in proportion to the light they receive. Consequently they yearn for it, and are ever begging for it with burning fervour. They desire to live as free as may be from worldly distractions ; they listen more willingly to the things of heaven than to the news of the world ; they desire to receive counsel, to be constantly exercised in the practice of virtue, more particularly applying themselves to all those things in which our Lord has more clearly communicated His light to them.

APPLICATION. Now you may see what you should do in order to obtain abundant light. Open the windows of your soul as widely as you can to God, and keep them as firmly closed to the things of earth and of the world.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enlighten my darkness, O my God.* (Ps. xvii, 29.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
THE CENTURION
(Read Matt. viii, 1–13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus showed Himself astonished at the virtue of this centurion, not because it was unknown to Him till then, but the more to confound the Jews by the example of this soldier, and that the chosen people so highly favoured by heaven should realise that they were surpassed in faith by a Gentile.

APPLICATION. You as a member of the Church belong to a chosen people most dear to God, and it should not be without confusion that you see so many others more detached from earthly goods, more enamoured of heavenly things, and greater lovers of the Cross of Christ than you are. If you feel not now ashamed, you will be covered with confusion at the last day at seeing so many others far less favoured than you, so superior to yourself in the virtues you now should practise.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He brought forth his people with joy and his chosen with gladness; that they might observe his precepts and seek after his law.* (Ps. civ, 43 and 45.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the centurion's faith. He had not the light of the Holy Scriptures nor the teaching of the prophets, yet he recognised Jesus as the true Son of God present everywhere by His immensity, and able by His omnipotence and with a single word to restore health to the palsied servant. Yet the Jews would not acknowledge Him, nay even plotted

His death after He had so manifestly shown Himself to them as the Son of God.

APPLICATION Nor indeed should this surprise you, for the light of faith does not shine in minds obscured by passion and sullied by vice. If you wish the light of faith which you received in Holy Baptism to remain burning, you must feed it with works of virtue, otherwise it will be a faith that is dead. *Faith without works is dead.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deal bountifully with thy servant; quicken thou me and I shall keep thy words.* (Ps. cxviii, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the great humility of the centurion, who at the very thought of Jesus coming into his house to heal his servant exclaimed: *Domine non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.*

APPLICATION. Holy Church puts these words upon your lips every time you receive Holy Communion. Have them also deeply engraven on your heart, and reflect seriously on your own abject nothingness, on the gravity and number of your sins, on your own ingratitude, and the little correspondence with the immense benefits you have received from the divine liberality. Know too that it is only through the virtue of humility that you can ever make satisfaction for this your great debt, and become acceptable in the eyes of God Who *gives grace to the humble.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath had regard to the prayer of the lowly and hath not despised their petition.* (Ps. ci, 8.)

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

When you shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants. (Luke xvii, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that if you could once for all take home to yourself these words of our Divine Lord, you would no longer be so much troubled with vainglory. How is it that every day finds you more proud? Because you grow more blind in the knowledge of yourself, thinking that you of yourself are something, whereas in fact you are a mere nothing.

APPLICATION. *If any man think himself to be something whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* (Gal. vi, 3.) If then you would acquire true humility begin by convincing yourself that you are absolutely nothing, and that everything you possess, sin excepted, all comes to you from God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am brought to nothing and I knew it not.* (Ps. lxxii, 22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that even naturally *if you think yourself* to be *something* you deceive yourself. As regards your very existence you are by yourself nothing, and as regards whatever you may do you are also nothing. What were you centuries ago before you were born? Such as of yourself you are to-day, for it was God Who gave you your being and it is He Who preserves it to you. Moreover all the acts that are a consequence of your being are from Him Who gave you that being and Who maintains it.

APPLICATION. Even your very will then comes from God, Who has given you this free faculty and

Who preserves it by concurring with each one of your voluntary acts. If this be so, *where is your glory ?* Why so vainglorious over your genius, your cleverness, your talents, when all are simply gifts from God ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory.* (Ps. cxiii, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that although vocation as a Christian be very high, yet if you are in sin, you are reduced to a state of worse than nothingness in God's sight. But, granted that you be in a state of grace, nevertheless in that state you are *nothing* in yourself and you have infinite reason for thanksgiving but none for vainglory. In order to perform a single meritorious act you need habitual grace which justifies and gives you the power to act aright, and each time you need the help of actual grace to do the act, just as in order to see, your eyes alone suffice not, but you need the aid of light.

APPLICATION. If then all this be the free gift of God, *where then is your glory ?* Would you perhaps attribute to yourself your co-operation with the grace of God ? But see you not that this co-operation itself is only the result of the grace of God working in you ? Jesus Christ said : *Without me you can do nothing*, so that you might understand that you have need of that grace not only at the beginning of the spiritual life, but for each successive act even unto your last breath, for without it you can do nothing. Therefore deceive not yourself, for the error is too apparent.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, art my protector and my glory.* (Ps. iii, 4.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

PARTICULAR JUDGMENT

I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it, at the day of judgment. (Matt. xii, 36.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how at the moment of death a man finds himself immediately in the presence of Christ the Judge. This appearance is compared in the Gospels to lightning, *like lightning*, because just as it contains in itself the flash of light, so Christ the Judge will in a flash lay bare to the soul all the evil it has done since the first dawn of reason, all the good it has neglected to do or has done badly. Nor will there be the least thought, an idle look, not even an idle word, that will not be shown up in that flash of light. How different in that moment will be the soul's estimate of its faults and failings from that which it had in this life!

APPLICATION. If you would be wise, provide in time for your turn by more exactness in your examens of conscience, by never despising the smallest fault, that thus you may not receive that rigorous judgment at the tribunal of Christ, of which even the greatest saints had so much fear.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, thou knowest my foolishness and my offences are not hid from thee.* (Ps. xlviii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that under this searching light the soul will hear the immutable and just sentence, which will come from the mouth of the Judge Himself, and will remain for ever indelibly graven in the mind of the soul that is judged. If that soul be in mortal

sin it will be condemned to the company of the demons and to eternal fire. If it be stained only with lesser sins, its angel guardian will conduct it to expiate its debts in purgatory. If in this life it was purified from all stain of guilt and punishment by penance and mortification, it will pass forward in company with Christ to take possession of the kingdom of the blessed.

APPLICATION. In a short time one or the other of these issues will be yours. Choose now which you prefer: *Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death.* (Jer. xxi, 8.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.* (Ps. l, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the confusion and despair of that soul which for a passing breath of glory, for some sensual pleasure, or for some momentary advantage, shall find itself for ever imprisoned in that abyss of everlasting fire. Consider too the remorse of those souls, who because they so little loved mortification and regular observance, will find themselves condemned for years perhaps to Purgatory, in sufferings greater than any in this life, which they could have atoned for in this life, by some slight penance, by which too they would have gained merit and glory.

APPLICATION. And yet how many there are who wait for the next life to make satisfaction to the Divine Justice for their sins. The future condition of very many souls was revealed to St. Teresa, and of these three only did she see going straight to heaven, without passing through Purgatory; one that of St. Peter of Alcantara, another of a Carmelite lay brother, the third of a Dominican Father. Reflect now whether

it be not better *to be cleansed*, as St. Pacianus says, *rather by water than by fire.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hear, O Lord, my prayer and my supplication : give ear unto my tears.* (Ps. xxxix, 13.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

WORLDLINESS

What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world? (Matt. xvi, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the satisfaction of the worldling consists in the honour, applause, dignity, wealth with which he is surrounded. In the pride of his heart he deems himself superior to other men, immortal like unto the cedars of Lebanon, as if he were never to die. So too he loves his wealth and grandeur as if he never were to lose them, and pampers his body as though it were never to become the food of worms.

APPLICATION. Let us bring this reflection home to ourselves. Wait but for a while and you will see what will become of all that vaunted wealth and grandeur. See what attachments perhaps have wound themselves round your heart also.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If riches increase, set not your heart on them.* (Ps. lxi, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that one has not to wait long before he beholds a change of scene. *I passed by and he was no longer there*, says holy David (Ps. xxxvi, 36) ; for in a moment of time as it were in a flash—all had gone, all had disappeared.

APPLICATION. Pause and think a little, what has become of the glory of those rich men, who have lived

surrounded with applause and grandeur, whom you even during your lifetime might have known. Say to yourself that theirs was not true glory but only vain and empty show, like unto that of a man who dreams and exults that he is raised to a throne. Could you possibly prize and desire glory such as that! Love and value only the glory of virtue, for there is none other that is lasting: *For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience.* (2 Cor. i, 12.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man is like to vanity; his days pass away as a shadow.* (Ps. cxliii, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what the Psalmist says (Ps. xxxvi, 35), that when he chanced to behold the glory of the wicked, he stayed not but passed on. Were you willingly to dwell on the prosperity of worldly people and to admire their pomp, you might expose yourself to many temptations. Say rather, when you also chance to see such things, earnestly to God, *Turn away mine eyes that they may not see vanity* (Ps. cxviii) and pass on thinking within yourself, how soon all will end. Picture to yourself the grave where the bodies of such will corrupt, while their souls may be suffering in the awful abyss of eternal woe. On the other hand, recall to your mind the glory of Paradise to which these easily may never attain.

APPLICATION. Never will you so well understand the little value of passing things as when you fix your thoughts upon eternity. In proportion as it is dangerous for you to let your mind contemplate worldly prosperity, as you see it before you, so much the more is it profitable for you to recall its emptiness when once it is passed. Go now and seek for the proud rich man when he is dead, seek him among his splendid surroundings and you will not be able to find him.

I sought for him and his place was not to be found.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast humbled the proud as one that is slain.* (Ps. lxxxviii, 11.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SINS OF THE TONGUE

Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. (Matt. xii, 36.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that all Christians whatsoever who desire to serve God devoutly, must necessarily learn how to curb their tongues. If your life be wholly or in part consecrated to contemplation you must needs restrain your tongue, so that silence may dispose you to obtain the gift of union with God. If you are engaged in an active life still more must you curb your tongue so as to learn to converse with your neighbour without fault and without scandal. In a word, you must learn both how to be silent and how also to speak in due season. *There is a time to be silent, and a time to speak.* (Eccles. iii, 7.)

APPLICATION. Examine yourself and see what control you have hitherto attained over your tongue. If you have acquired none, your glory in your name of religious, as St. James says (i, 26) is a vain one, for *this man's religion is vain.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips.* (Ps. cxl, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that no one can ever succeed in bridling his tongue so perfectly as never to make a slip: *The tongue no man can tame.* (James iii, 8.) Nevertheless you must strive to bridle it, and to bring

it under the control of reason, which, as it must govern the other members of the body, so too especially has to rule the tongue. All the other senses, such as the eyes, ears and taste, are exposed to only one kind of offence, but the tongue sins and fails in many ways, so as to be called *a world of iniquity*. (James iii, 6.) It even conspires with other sins that have nothing to do with it, by instigation, by counsel, by command.

APPLICATION. In order then to avoid the sins of the tongue you must needs strive to overcome all your other faults. You cannot lay claim to be a true follower of Christ if you do not restrain your tongue, because that in itself is proof that you have not overcome the passions of anger, of pride, of envy, and so forth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.* (Ps. xxxviii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that often one gives himself liberty in speaking, *not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart.* (James i, 26.) He will speak well of himself to gain the good opinion of others. He will criticise and condemn the actions of his superiors, and speak slightingly of his neighbour, in order not to appear to be a flatterer. He wastes his time in useless conversation, in mere trivialities, in order to gain the good will of his hearers.

APPLICATION. Be assured of this, that if your tongue is too free you are deceiving your own heart. Recollect yourself and examine the past. Remember the words of St. James: *Who is the wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show by a good conversation his worth in the meekness of Wisdom.* (iii, 13.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou shalt open my*

lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall declare thy praise. (Ps. l, 17.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

LOVE OF THE POOR

The poor have the gospel preached to them. (Matt. xi, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY who it is whom the Psalmist calls (Ps. xl, 1) especially blessed. It is he who seeing Christ poor in His life and naked in death, is not deterred by the sight of such abjection, but sees beyond this, understands that He is God Himself, and does not let himself be led by his senses but by faith. It is for this that he is called blessed : *Blessed is he that considereth the needy and the poor. The Lord will deliver him in the evil day.* (Ps. xl, 1.)

APPLICATION. If you could only succeed in understanding that under that humiliation lies hidden your every good, would you ever be ashamed of following Him in His abasement ? Try to realize it to the very best of your power, so that it will help you at the day of your death, a day so dreadful on account of so many sins and such anxieties. No one at that hour will be so protected by Jesus as he, who can say with truth that he has been faithful to Him in life by following Him in all His humiliations.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor and in labours from my youth.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY who again it is who is called blessed. It is he who seeing any poor man in extreme want, understands full well that beneath the worn-out rags of that poor man is hidden Christ Himself, Who having chosen to live on earth in extreme poverty

wills to profess it still in the person of each poor man, declaring that, *what you did to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to me.* And hence he is moved to help the poor man if he can, or at least to respect him, to pity him and to console him, as he would do to the person of Christ Himself. He who does this is called blessed, because he has the full merit of that charity done to the poor from motives of faith and in honour of Jesus Christ. This merit is not acquired by one who helps the poor from mere instincts of human compassion, for pagans may act thus. For this compassion so beautifully practised towards the poor, there is promised you in reward a remission of penalties due to you at the hour of death. It will also win for you the inestimable grace of true contrition.

APPLICATION. O how highly you should esteem the exercise of this compassion ; you should practise it as much as ever your state of life allows you to do.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do justice to the humble and the poor. Rescue the poor.* (Ps. lxxxi, 3–4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY who it is once more who is called blessed. It is he who does not wait for the poor to ask his charity, but who thinks of them himself, foresees and feels for their needs, goes to visit prisoners in their prison, the sick in the hospital, provides for them and comforts them, becomes their advocate and protector, knowing well that he gains more for himself than he gives to the poor.

APPLICATION. If you act thus you will be most assuredly blessed. At your death our Lord will Himself come to your aid and defend you against the enemy of your soul. Indeed it is well that you should gain for yourself such a champion for that dread hour, by doing all you possibly can to help the poor.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath given to the poor, his justice endureth for ever and ever; his horn shall be exalted in glory.* (Ps. cxi, 9.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FALLING AWAY FROM GOD

Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? (John vi, 68.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY who those are of whom the Apostle says (Heb. x, 26–27), that they *sin wilfully after having a knowledge of the truth.* They are particularly those who, after having by special light been called to serve God in His holy Church, and having embraced the yoke of Christ, little by little grow relaxed and abandon the religious life. They are of two classes—some, who throw up wholly the practice of religion, others, who retain the outward appearance but in reality give up its practices, and resume an utterly worldly way of living.

APPLICATION. What will it avail you not to have been one of the former class of apostates, if you are unhappy enough to enter into the number of the second, for both are threatened with the chastisement threatened by the Apostle?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will meditate on thy commandments, I will consider thy ways.* (Ps. cxviii, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that of those who fall away it is said that they sin voluntarily *after having knowledge*, while many others sin through passion, not really knowing the evil they are doing. Many, alas! sin knowingly because they turn their back on the light of the Divine Sun which shone before their eyes. What

wonder then is it if of them it is said, *that their offering for sin is not received* ? Jesus cannot say to the Eternal Father : *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Luke xxiii, 34), for they understand the enormous sin of a bad life, the scandal it gives their neighbours, the displeasure of God, and the imminent peril of damnation, which they have so often clearly realised by the sure light of their spiritual exercises, and which nevertheless they wilfully despise.

APPLICATION. Are you not horrified at the thought of such a condition ? Do not then trust yourself, for little by little one may fall into it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The unjust man would not understand that he might do well.* (Ps. xxxv, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that these unhappy persons have from time to time some remembrance of the judgment to come, which suffices to trouble and embitter all the liberty and all that false pleasure which they allow themselves, or makes this remembrance of that judgment most terrible to them. But how much more terrible will it be in reality at the moment of death, when they will have to appear before the tribunal of their Lord to Whom they have been so badly wanting in fidelity. These will be most severely reproached by Christ in their particular judgment, and in the universal judgment ; these will be the most execrated, these the most accursed and sentenced to most terrible punishment, for of all the enemies of a prince, rebels are the most hateful to him.

APPLICATION. If you do not feel overcome with terror at the thought of these evils, tremble and fear lest soon you may be counted in the number of these rebels.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enlighten my eyes, that I sleep not ever in death.* (Ps. xii, 5.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
CHRIST STILLS THE TEMPEST
(Read Matt. viii, 23–27).

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that while the disciples were in the boat with Christ, Who was sleeping, there arose so great a tempest that they were in danger of perishing. So also to just souls who are united with Christ by grace, violent agitations arise, and temptation and danger are not wanting. They are permitted by Christ either in order to correct some tepidity or negligence, on their part, or to establish them in humility and to urge them to have recourse with greater fervour to Divine help.

APPLICATION. If then you find yourself in a violent agitation, try to humble yourself and have a firm confidence that the Lord does not wish to abandon you in that temptation or that trouble, but desires to prove your fidelity and to make you more faithful in His service.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have put my trust in thee, O Lord. I said: Thou art my God.* (Ps. xxx, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the disciples seeing themselves in danger of perishing hastened to awaken our Lord from sleep, crying out to Him, *Lord, save us, we perish.*

APPLICATION. This is just what our Lord desires you should do when you find yourself in peril amid a tempest of most violent temptations, or of really acute sufferings. He wishes you to humble yourself and recognise your own utter weakness, to shake off your lukewarmness, to have recourse with greater fervour to the aid of God Who for the negligent is asleep, but

Who ever watches over all His faithful followers. Learn from the prayer of the disciples how you should pray to Him in the time of danger. *Lord, save us, we perish.* Thou Who art my Lord, and the Lord of all creatures, do not permit that I should perish and that Thine enemies should triumph at my destruction. Thou, Who alone canst defend us from them, save us.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; save me in thy mercy.* (Ps. xxx, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the disciples were reproved by Jesus Christ, not because they waked Him from sleep, and cried to Him to save them from danger, but for the want of faith they showed in fearing the tempest too much, and in trusting little in their Divine Master: *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*

APPLICATION. Would that you never showed yourself thus doubly blameable, either because you do not have recourse to our Lord in your necessities, or because you turn to Him without that confidence which you owe to His infinite goodness. You thus do a great wrong to Christ and you injure yourself greatly. Have always a lively confidence in God's help, because thus you will be less disturbed amid the violent agitations of passion, and the calm will come more quickly: *And there came a great calm.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord.* (Ps. xxx, 25.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

DEATH

At what hour you think not, the son of man will come. (St. Luke xii, 40.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the bad life of Christians is usually the result of the persuasion that death will not come on them so soon. They are like those slothful servants who, thinking that their master will prolong his stay in the city, neglect their household work, and waste their time in all sorts of excesses. So too do such Christians, who imagining that their Lord is still far off, live more and more carelessly, and put off the amendment of their life from day to day.

APPLICATION. O how important it is for you to bear always in mind that death will not delay, so that you may set your accounts with God well in order, and amend your way of life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.* (Ps. lvi, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you have no difficulty in remembering that death will come to you some day, but that you have the greatest difficulty in being willing to realise that it will come soon, for here is your real trouble. You go on deceiving yourself in a thousand ways, till death surprises you when you least think of it. Wherefore the wise man says to you : *Remember that death is not slow.* And if it is not slow, it is a sign therefore that it certainly will come without delay, for there is no one who can stop it. Death is not bound by place, nor time, nor means ; it may come upon you without your perceiving its approach, anywhere, at

any hour, through any kind of illness, by a fall, a sudden accident.

APPLICATION. Now if nothing can stop the approach of death, how can you imagine that it will delay in coming to you ? *Remember that death is not slow.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *You like men shall die : and shall fall like one of the princes.* (Ps. lxxxi, 7.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that these truths are well known, for who is there who does not know that he is mortal ? Who is there who does not every day understand or see that very many, little and great, young and old, healthy and strong, are surprised suddenly by death ? Nevertheless, how great is the necessity that you should remember death, although you try by all means in your power to banish the unpleasant spectre from your mind ! God has filled the whole world with images of death : *He filled all things with death*, in order that wherever you go it may be present to you. Present in the gardens, when you see these flowers, which were just now blooming, fading away ; and those trees, a moment before rich in foliage, become quickly bare and naked ; present in the fields when you see the corn fully ripe, awaiting at any moment the scythe ; present in the fountain, where the water after flowing from afar, comes out into the sunlight, and goes of itself to bury itself anew in the darkness ; present in your own room, when you see the candle that lights it diminishing by degrees, and dying before your eyes.

APPLICATION. Make use of all such images, in order to remember, and to keep vividly before your mind the thought that death does not delay, and by these means you will accustom yourself to live only for that all-important thing, which is Eternity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I thought upon the days of old: and I had in my mind the eternal years.* (Ps. lxxvi, 6.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FRATERNAL CHARITY

To love one's neighbour as one's self, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices. (Mark xii, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that by these words our Lord teaches you that every kind action you do your neighbour for the love of God, as He has commanded you, i.e. as if it were done to His own person, is an act of supernatural charity, of greater merit than are acts of religion, such as sacrifices and burnt offerings. Such acts of supernatural charity honour God, at the same time as they benefit our neighbour.

APPLICATION. If this be so, how important it is that whenever you do some act of charity to your neighbour, you should accustom yourself to raise your heart to God and do it for love of Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* (Ps. cxxxii, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that these acts of charity to our neighbour for love of Him, are so pleasing to our Lord that He easily permits acts of charity though not inspired by this supernatural motive, to be preferred to other religious acts: and so He allows you, in order to help some sick person who has need of you, to omit to go to Mass sometimes on a Feast Day. And if again, in order to be useful to your neighbour, you forego the sacrifice of yourself, that you make to God by fasting and penance, the supreme goodness of

God is content to set aside His own honour for your convenience.

APPLICATION. Learn then once for all to have a high esteem for such acts of charity, which up to now you have thought so little of. You may be a lover of penance, and yet at the same time utterly reluctant to trouble yourself to give your neighbour pleasure, nor will you pardon a sharp word from him, although you yourself in many ways hurt his feelings. The Lord cannot accept your lesser sacrifices, whilst you neglect the greatest of all, which are acts of charity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in thy holy hill? He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue: nor hath done evil to his neighbour: nor taken up a reproach against his neighbours.* (Ps. xiv, 1 and 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you are bound to act towards your neighbour in a different way with regard to temporal and spiritual matters. In temporal things such as money, comforts and similar matters in which your true good does not consist, give all that you can of them to your neighbour and then you will always be doing your duty. But in spiritual things which are the grace of God, the virtues of humility and obedience, and such like, which are your true good, you must not give them up to your neighbour. You must even have a holy rivalry with him. *Be zealous for the better gifts*, for they are spiritual goods, and of such a nature that many may possess them at the same time, without prejudice to one another.

APPLICATION. Now God wishes that as you are quick to bestow temporal goods upon your neighbour,

so you will not readily yield to him at all in spiritual matters.

Affections and resolutions. *His mercy is confirmed upon us : and the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.* (Ps. cxvi, 2.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

LOVERS OF THE WORLD

I have chosen you out of the world. (John xv, 19.)

Consider firstly that the word world in Holy Scripture often means all the earthly goods and possessions that come within a lifetime. Although this world can only offer temporal and transitory things, yet it expects you to cling to it rather than to God Himself, Who promises you the lasting gifts of eternity. Picture to yourself the world on one side, and God on the other, vying with one another to possess you. The world offers you pleasures, honours, riches, but only for the short time that this life can last; if in the other life you fare badly it is your loss. But God offers you infinitely greater benefits, not in time which passes but in eternity.

Application. It is for you to decide to which side it is to your best interest to attach yourself.

Affections and resolutions. *Better is a little to the just than the great riches of the wicked.* (Ps. xxxvi, 16.)

Consider secondly how most men cleave to this world because living merely as an animal life they think of the present only and very little of the future.

Application. Look rather at the future than at the present, for thus you will not go with closed eyes

along the path of the many, the easy road which invites you : *The way of sinners is made plain with stones* (Eccles. xxi, 11), but note, *in their end is hell, and darkness, and pains.* To the ambitious *hell*, to the avaricious *darkness*, to the unchaste *pains*. On the contrary the way of the Lord which leads you outside of the world in poverty, in chastity and obedience is narrow, but it *leads to life*. Does it not seem to you good to walk in the way of the Lord ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.* (Ps. xxxvi, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that St. James (iv, 4) declares an enemy of God not whoever is in the world, but only him who would be the friend of the world, to make you understand that as it is possible, though it be rare because difficult, to live in the world without being a friend of the world, so also it is possible after having turned one's back on the world to make oneself a friend of the world. Who is said to be a friend to another ? He who has similar ideas, similar affections, similar aims. Oh how many Christians there are who by conforming themselves to the world become friends of the world, and consequently enemies of God !

APPLICATION. If you do not wish to fall into so sad a misfortune hate the maxims of the world, and detest all its wisdom so earthly, animal, and diabolical. Pray to our Lord that He may make you know well that true wisdom which He Himself in person brought to earth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Decline from evil and do good, and dwell for ever and ever.* (Ps. xxxvi, 27.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

HELL

Fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into hell. (Matt. x, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how great is the number of those who are lost, for as a great number of men live badly reason dictates that they should also die badly. And will perchance the fact of having so many companions in misery be any comfort? How foolishly many are in the habit of saying, "Well if I am lost I shall not go alone!" But, oh, how much this fact will increase their misery and frenzy, when they are already unable to resist or to support their distress!

APPLICATION. Reflect on this and see what little comfort companionship such as this would bring.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments.* (Ps. cxviii, 120.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the reason why so many are condemned is because they permit themselves to be led away even as *irrational sheep.* (2 Peter ii, 12.) They let themselves be drawn on by the multitude, and are enticed by bad companions, and worse than sheep they do these things with their eyes closed. This imitation of others in their bad practices is very prejudicial also to those with whom we live.

APPLICATION. Do not heed therefore what the worldly and the careless do. Be careful only of what you have to do yourself under the obligation of your conscience and of your rule of life, if you would be saved.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unless the Lord*

had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell. (Ps. xciii, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that they who go to hell as sheep, as sheep *shall death devour them.* (Ps. xlviii, 15.) By death we must understand every kind of suffering that can produce death, or one may even take it to mean the demon of death who bears that name because he is the author of death, as Christ is called life because He is the author of life. It will be that demon who will never cease heaping on them every kind of most atrocious torture, for, having lived like sheep and having imitated the evil practices of others on earth, they will find themselves led to hell like flocks of sheep to the slaughter.

APPLICATION. And will you place yourself in this awful danger of being lost, merely because you are not ready to overcome a miserable human respect, in withdrawing yourself from the bad examples of others?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast brought forth, O Lord, my soul from hell: thou hast saved me from them that go down into the pit.* (Ps. xxix, 4.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

Follow thou Me. (John xxi, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that one of the chief ends, for which our Lord came into this world was to teach and animate us by His blessed example to walk on the way to Calvary. Hence the Apostle St. Peter (1 Peter ii, 21) reminds us of this alone, because for us it is most necessary. For although we have been already redeemed by Christ through His passion and

death on the cross, and are enlightened by His evangelical doctrine, yet we cannot be saved if we do not resolutely set ourselves to follow Him along the way of suffering that He Himself chose.

APPLICATION. You must place yourself at the foot of the cross of Jesus Crucified, not only that you may contemplate Him with your eyes, and compassionate in your heart His sufferings, but also that you may follow Him with your footsteps, and closely imitate His example: *Leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In thy sight are all they that afflict me; my heart hath expected reproach and misery.* (Ps. lxviii, 21.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you must not let yourself be frightened, when you hear that you are strictly obliged to walk after the example of Christ Who suffered so greatly, for such an example was left you, not that you should ever equal it exactly, but only *that you should follow it.* Now can you say that you follow it, if you always take the road directly opposed to it? Do you excuse yourself as not having the strength to follow in the way of such suffering as that of Christ? But you cannot excuse yourself for not co-operating with those helps which grace imparts to you for such an end, while you completely neglect to follow Him, and openly turn your back upon Him, seeking with all your power, your comfort, your ease, and your advantage.

APPLICATION. It is not therefore your weakness that prevents your following Christ to Calvary but your bad will. If you cannot suffer as much as Christ did, at least be desirous to suffer with Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath coveted*

to long for thy justifications, at all times. (Ps. cxviii, 20.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that very many tread the path of suffering, yet do not follow Christ, because they suffer merely because they must such an infirmity as a humiliation and disaster. Now in order to follow Christ, it is not enough for you to walk in the way of suffering along which He passed—you must tread in His footsteps, and walk in the manner in which He walked. You must suffer with such a resignation of will, with such peace and perseverance as Christ Himself teaches you. Such is the meaning of following in His footsteps. *My foot hath followed His steps.* (Job xxiii, 11.)

APPLICATION. If you want to encourage your heart, say often to yourself: *Christ also suffered for us*, a God for a man, the Creator for the creature! And how then should I not suffer for Him, and suffer too with gladness?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord my strength.* (Ps. xvii, 2.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE FEAR OF GOD

Yea, I say to you, fear Him. (Luke xii, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the fear of the Lord is said in Holy Scripture to be the beginning of wisdom, because as in the art of building the first step in the work is to excavate and lay the foundation on which the building is to be raised, so the fear of God is the first work which the Divine Wisdom begins in the heart of the just man, as the foundation of the whole spiritual edifice. This fear however is not that which is called servile, whereby is feared the punishment

and not the fault. It is that filial fear which moves the just man, who realises how worthy God is of supreme honour and of supreme love, to submit himself to God with the reverence of a son to his father for fear of offending Him.

APPLICATION. Do you wish to know whether the Divine Wisdom has begun to establish in you the foundations of the spiritual edifice? See then whether the fear that predominates in you towards God be that of a son or rather that of a slave.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Holy and terrible is his name; the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* (Ps. cx, 9–10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that filial fear is not only a foundation, but also an essential foundation which, as the root, not only supports the tree but also nourishes and strengthens it. *The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord.* (Ecclus. i, 25.) Just then as all the branches and flowers, all the leaves and fruits of the tree are utterly dependent upon the root, without which they would all wither away, so all the good works of the just spring from the holy fear of God. *He that feareth God will do good.* (Ecclus. xv, 1.) It imparts to them all their vigour, as the principle and root of their very life.

APPLICATION. See then how important it is to keep alive and active within us this fear of God. A root has most efficacy when its fibres are deep and vigorous.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *His salvation is nigh unto them that fear him.* (Ps. lxxxiv, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you cannot know for certain whether this holy fear of God, from which all good proceeds, dwells within you, for it is a hidden thing

like the roots of a tree that lie buried beneath the earth. It is for your good that God wills that you should not know it, in order that from the apprehension of not possessing this fear you may the more perfectly preserve it. The more deeply a root is covered with earth the more vigour it has; and so it is with holy fear. It is true also that if the natural fruits of the root never fail, one may be morally certain that the root also is full of life.

APPLICATION. If you constantly refrain from evil from the motive of not offending God, and if you do good works in order to please Him, you may be morally sure that the root of the holy fear of God is alive within you. Whereas if you refrain from evil through human respect, and do good works simply in order to succeed, or to gain praise or for any other human motive, you can have no certainty that you possess this holy fear of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; he shall delight exceedingly in his commandments.* (Ps. cxi, 1.)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
PARABLE OF THE COCKLE AND THE GOOD SEED

(Read Matt. xiii, 24–30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what abundant seed of lights and of good thoughts, impulses and holy inspirations God has till now sown in your mind. In the case of any other perhaps they would have more than sufficed to make of him a saint. Consider then what fruit of good works this abundant and good seed has up to now produced in you. How much good that our Lord with His special inspirations expected

of you have you failed to do? Of how many negligences have you been guilty? What sins have you not knowingly and deliberately committed?

APPLICATION. Examine carefully the kind of life you have led up till now. Place alongside of it the gifts of grace which you have received so copiously from the hand of God. You will thus find abundant matter for confusion.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* (Ps. cii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the origin of this want of correspondence by which you return Him a harvest of the cockle of sins instead of the pure wheat of virtue. *From whence then hath it cockle?* The cause is twofold, namely—the fault of your own slothfulness, and the malice of your enemies. He who sleeps has his eyes closed and is alive only as to his body, but as to his soul he is unconscious. You too are as one sleeping because you keep your eyes closed to all the interests of your soul, and look only to satisfy your senses. This is the first cause of the growth of the cockle. The second is the malice of your mortal enemies who, seeing you so negligent, never cease to sow within you the seeds of worldly thoughts and ideas, of suggestions and desires from which nothing but evil can result.

APPLICATION. Be vigilant therefore and watch over yourself, if you would close the entrance against these enemies who themselves never sleep.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast been my hope, a tower of strength against the face of the enemy.* (Ps. lx, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the good seed cannot at

first be easily distinguished from the bad, nor the wheat from the cockle, but at the harvest they are at once recognised. So in this life where the virtuous live together with sinners, the more perfect with the less so, it is not always easy to distinguish the one from the other. Nay, even in the same person a fault may often be mistaken for a virtue; envy may appear to be zeal, sloth moderation, and so on. But how easily will be seen the difference at the harvest time, when the Divine Husbandman will order the good grain to be separated from the cockle, vice from virtue, the reprobate from the elect: *Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.* Oh what a great separation will that be—the separation of the reprobate into eternal fire, and of the elect to the glory of Paradise.

APPLICATION. Remember that you also remain ever exposed to this separation even unto the last moment of your life. Ever bear this thought seriously and frequently in your heart.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things.* (Ps. xxxiii, 16–17.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

PERSEVERANCE

He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved. (Matt. x, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the thought of a long life before you is often that which prevents you from persevering in the virtues you have begun to practise. Entertain rather the thought that each day may very

likely be your last. When our Lord says, through the mouth of St. John: *Behold I come quickly* (Apoc. iii, 11), He does not say *I shall come*, but *I come*, for He comes with rapid strides and is *even at the doors*. (Matt. xxiv, 33.) This same warning is also repeated in your ears, perhaps by growing infirmities, perhaps by the failing of sight or of hearing and so forth.

APPLICATION. Notice how the Apostle speaking of the trumpet of the day of judgment calls it *the last trumpet*, because many others have already preceded it. When you hear of some one being killed by a fall, another by the sword, another by taking cold, another by some unexpected accident, all these things are so many trumpet-sounds of warning for you. How many such warning notes have you not already heard? Yet you never think they sound as a warning to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O remember not our former iniquities. Let thy mercies speedily prevent us.* (Ps. lxxviii, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that if the Lord delays to come, you must resolutely encourage yourself to persevere, for everything is at stake. What would happen to you if for want of patience for a few days, you came to lose that glorious crown which is prepared for you, if only you persevere, by always keeping alive in your heart that desire of serving God, practising those same exercises of devotion, that same regularity, that same obedience with which you began a really new life?

APPLICATION. The grace of God which you need for this is always at hand for you; you have but to ask for it with all your heart.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With my whole*

heart have I sought after thee; let me not stray from thy commandments. (Ps. cxviii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that perseverance in order to obtain the crown is all to your own advantage, and not that of our Lord. If you compass your own loss, there will not be wanting to Him other servants, as many as He would. It is our Lord Himself Who holds the crown ready for you, and by no one can it be wrested from you by force.

APPLICATION. Reflect then seriously how He has chosen you, loved you and given you the means of winning this crown, in preference to so many others whom He has not favoured in like manner. But if He sees your great ingratitude, He will then abandon you, and find elsewhere another to inherit the crown offered first to you, and by you so unworthily rejected.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness; thou hast set a crown of precious stones upon his head.* (Ps. xx, 4.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

MORTIFICATION

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. (John iii, 6.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY with what serious punishment God threatens the man who wishes to live a life according to the flesh. If, says St. Paul, *you live according to the flesh you shall die.* (Rom. viii, 13.) Such a one yields to his nature in all things and grants it daily all that it demands. On the other hand, consider the high reward of him who is willing to mortify the flesh and all its ill-ordered desires. *If by*

the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live. (Rom. viii, 13.)

APPLICATION. Make then your choice from henceforth whether you will take the way that leads to life, or that which leads to death. Consider also well that it is not as easy to turn back half-way, as it is not to start at all on the wrong path.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Our heart hath not turned back ; neither hast thou turned aside our steps from thy way.* (Ps. xliii, 19.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the death threatened to him who lives according to the flesh has in it more deaths than one. The first is the death of sin, because this is the first that really happens. The second is the death of nature, which having its origin in original sin is hastened by actual sin. The third is the death of eternal loss. These alas, very often happen at one and the same time, for at the same moment one may sin, one may die, and one may be cast into hell. Oh what a terrible ending ! On the other hand think how the life that is promised to him who mortifies the flesh is likewise a three-fold life. The first is the natural life, for godliness and holiness prolong even one's years : *He that is temperate shall prolong life.* (Ecclus. xxxvii, 34.) The second is the life of grace, which is obtained and preserved by mortification. The third is the life of glory, which mortification increases in the next world, and even in this life anticipates by spiritual consolations.

APPLICATION. Observe well then that if mortification be in reality a true love of oneself, the satisfying of the desires of nature is a real hatred of one's own best interests.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have hated and*

abhorred iniquity ; but thy law have I loved. (Ps. cxviii, 163.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that a life purely of the Spirit is not possible on this earth, but only in heaven above. Still it is by the Spirit that you must try to oppose and restrain the insolence of the flesh, which with its untamed impulses dares to rebel against him whom it ought to obey. Notice moreover that there are three kinds of life. First, the life of the angels, which is entirely spiritual, and to which we may not hope to attain ; the second is the mere animal life, and this we must simply abhor ; the third, the life of a mortified man, which lies midway between the other two.

APPLICATION. This latter then is the life which you should embrace. When this mortification is of an ordinary degree, it is that of a reasonable and of a Christian man ; when it is of a more eminent degree, it is that of a truly spiritual man such as the Apostle speaks of : *Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus.* (2 Cor. iv, 10.) To this life we can all at least aspire.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who will give me the wings of a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?* (Ps. liv, 7.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

PURITY OF INTENTION

Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. vii, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that all that you do, not only in your religious actions but even in your ordinary ones, should be all directed to the honour of God, and this not merely by a general intention but also if

possible by an actual one. Thus will you increase your merit, for how many of your works gain for you no fruit because you do them only from natural motives? Elevate them to God, so that your work and your studies, your eating and sleeping, the innocent recreations you enjoy, all you do may be directed to the honour and glory of God.

APPLICATION. If you act only to please yourself, you acquire the habit of always fostering self-love, to your own great detriment and loss. If, on the contrary, you offer the fruit of all your works to our Lord you will be very pleasing to Him, and will be able to say to God: *All fruits, the new and the old, I have kept for thee* (Cant. vii, 13), the *new* being the works of grace, and the *old* the works of nature.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will offer thee burnt offerings full of marrow.* (Ps. lxv, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that although it suffices to offer all your works to God at the beginning of each day, it is still better to renew your offering from time to time during the day. It is unfortunately only too easy for this first intention and offering to become diverted or even annulled by one's own self-love.

APPLICATION. Be careful therefore to renew your intention as often as you can. This habit will become quite easy to you in time, and by its means you will be doing *everything* in general and *each thing* in particular in honour of God, *in the name of the Lord* as St. Paul says (Col. iii, 17), not merely *for the name* of God, as one who offers by habit, but *in the name* of God, as one who in very deed offers each act.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give glory to the Lord, and call upon his name.* (Ps. civ, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that just in the same way as you

offer all things to God, even so must you thank Him for all, seeing that all you offer is His gift. You are as it were a river swollen with the tide of God's goodness. Bear back to Him therefore all He has given you. This thanksgiving you should offer direct to God the Father, Who is the origin of all the good that comes to us. But also since He has given us all things through Christ, so it is His pleasure that we should thank Him for all things through Christ.

APPLICATION. Be careful to cultivate these sentiments of gratitude. Think often of the lesson regarding it taught by Jesus Christ in the parable of the lepers. How pitiable, on the contrary, is the state of those who instead of so doing, rather live like the beasts of earth that graze on the pasture that lies before them, without once ever raising their eyes to the giver of this their food.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Sing unto the Lord a new song, let his praise be in the church of the saints.* (Ps. cxlix, 1.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

ZEAL FOR SOULS

I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost. (Matt. xv, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that you who by the grace of God have already entered upon the right way, are in duty bound to draw others from their evil ways. You too should do your utmost to save the souls of your neighbours from the death of sin. Think of the state of a body when the soul has left it, and realise how far worse is the state of the soul when she has lost her God. The body is not conscious of its loss, but

the soul that has lost God, though she may not realise it at once will, alas, do so later on.

APPLICATION. If then you may be the means of saving the soul of your neighbour from such a death, you too will become in very deed a saviour like unto Jesus Christ Himself. Does not this appear to you to be an object worthy of your highest ambition ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears and my feet from falling.* (Ps. cxiv, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that our Lord has willed that the charity which recalls those who have erred, should not go unrewarded, for it *shall cover a multitude of sins.* Is not that itself an immense reward ? In return for the good you do to your neighbour by drawing him back from the death of the soul, God will remit the punishment due to your past sins, and will even forgive the guilt of your present ones. If they are venial He will pardon them instantly because of that act of charity ; if they are mortal, He will give you the help of His grace to enter into yourself and to detest them. He will moreover give you efficacious grace to preserve you from temptations and to strengthen you in trials, and He will visit you still more lovingly in time of prayer.

APPLICATION. Reflect then that this reward shall be yours also, if you endeavour to call back sinners from the errors of their ways.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine eyes have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 136.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that perhaps you excuse yourself from exercising this great charity because you are neither a preacher nor a missionary. But though you

neither preach nor teach, why cannot you at least help your neighbours by a word of warning, of correction or of counsel and by giving good example? Why cannot you come to their assistance by your constant prayers to win their conversion from God? He who attempts the conversion of sinners by dealing directly with them often fails and works in vain, but he who treats the matter with God in the way he ought, always obtains it.

APPLICATION. What excuse then have you if you do not ask God to open the eyes of sinners that they may enter into themselves and may repent? *Pray one for another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much.* (James v, 16.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Fainting hath laid hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 53.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

LIFE OF GRACE

Without me you can do nothing. (John xv, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that by the word justice in Holy Scripture is often understood the grace of God which makes a man just. Without it man is the most miserable of beings, hardly deserving the name of a man. Now you must be ready to preserve within you this grace of God at any cost that may be necessary. There must be no detachment from self or from those dear to you that you will not be ready to bear. Nay, even, you must be ready to part with life rather than be led to lose that grace which is the life of the soul and life eternal. *The grace of God is life everlasting.* (Rom. vi, 23.)

APPLICATION. This death which may have to be encountered in order to preserve grace is twofold, the one real, the other figurative or spiritual. Those die a real death who let themselves even be killed rather than yield to what is wrong. For this death one must always be prepared. Those die spiritually who by continual self-denial can say with the Apostle: *I die daily.* (1 Cor. xv, 31.) It is to this death that you must submit yourself in order to preserve within you divine grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.* (Ps. cxli, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that our inferior nature has a great repugnance not only to actual death but also to spiritual death. *Strive for justice for thy soul,* says the Holy Scripture, *and even unto death fight for justice.* (Ecclus. iv, 33.) How many there are who in war face the fire, either to please their sovereign, or for ambition's sake, or for reward! You too with your higher nature must contend still more strenuously against your lower nature, and do for God what so many are not afraid of doing for the world. *Strive for justice,* and that not only in order to maintain yourself in a state of grace, but also to increase in grace, since every additional degree of grace well merits any amount of suffering for it, even were it the worst of deaths.

APPLICATION. Were you then even to hasten your death by the intensity of your fervour, how much better would it be in such a case to lose ten years of life, if by so doing you were to gain even ten degrees of grace! Were you to shorten your life whilst engaged in saving souls, happy indeed would be your lot, for you would thereby obtain a far more precious crown than all the world could give you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you may perhaps be inclined to shrink from such a high enterprise through the knowledge of your own weakness. Observe then what the Scripture adds: *And God will overthrow thy enemies for thee.* (Ecclus. iv, 33.) Your duty is to fight. It is for God to conquer for you. Of yourself you can do nothing, but if you neglect not the little that you can do, with the help of the grace that God is ever giving you to overcome your unruly inclinations, your love of ease and of praise, God will give you strength to fight well, and He will at the same time give you the victory.

APPLICATION. See then that you do not grow weary of co-operating with divine grace, and come to lay down your arms, for it is only by your doing so that your enemies can ever triumph over you. Be constant therefore and faithful, fight manfully, even unto the hour of your death, and *God will overthrow thy enemies for thee.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear.* (Ps. xxvi, 3.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE WILL OF GOD

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.
(John iv, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ says that His food is to do the will of His Father. He does not speak of His labours, His journeys, His preaching and suffering for the salvation of men, as His food, although in

reality the Father's will consisted in all these things. This is to teach you that what most sustains and nourishes the spiritual life does not consist so much in the performance of the duties imposed on you by your state of life or by obedience, as in having always the intention of doing in them your Heavenly Father's will.

APPLICATION. In whatsoever place therefore or condition you may be, whatever duty or work you have in hand, whether more arduous or less, you must be solicitous only to do the will of God, for this is your real food.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey unto my mouth.* (Ps. cxviii, 103.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the accomplishment of the holy will of God is the food of the soul, because just as food sustains the life of the body, so does the fulfilment of the will of God in your actions sustain in you the life of the soul which is grace. There is however this great difference and advantage, that whereas ordinary food cannot in the long run keep death from the body, by doing always the will of God your soul will never perish : *Labour for the meat which endureth unto life everlasting.* (John vi, 27.)

APPLICATION. If in all your daily duties you aim at anything else than the fulfilment of the Divine Will, it will not become for you food unto everlasting life, but food that is tainted and corrupted by ill-regulated and worldly aims. If on the contrary you are in all your actions intent on doing the will of God, it will be to you the food of life, even of eternal life : *your soul shall live.* (Isa. lv, 3.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy law is in the midst of my heart.* (Ps. xxxix, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that material food not only maintains and preserves the life of the body, but strengthens and gives it growth, imparting vigour, restoring it when weak, perfecting it and bringing it to its full stature. Spiritual food acts in the same way with the soul. It makes it progress by degrees and raises it from the state of beginners to that of proficients, and from that of proficients to that of the perfect. Moreover it strengthens and restores it.

APPLICATION. What then can possibly give more content to a follower of Jesus Christ, than does the certainty that he has, that in whatever position he may be placed under the obedience of a superior, he may be sure that he is doing the will of God? He is certain that he can never have any more holy occupation than that of fulfilling the will of his Heavenly Father. It is this that in all things rejoices and reanimates his soul, and makes him able to say with Christ: *I do always those things that please Him.* Set yourself then only to do the will of your Heavenly Father in such manner that every occupation, place, and work will become pleasant for you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *One thing have I asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* (Ps. xxvi, 4.)

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

(Read Matt. xiii, 31–32.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Fathers of the Church have seen many meanings of this grain of mustard seed, but chiefly that of the evangelical truths and doctrines which Jesus came to sow in the minds of men.

These in spite of being despised by the wise ones of this world because of the humble, lowly appearance which they present, yet have so grown and spread throughout the world as to have discredited all worldly wisdom and to have drawn innumerable souls to lead even a heavenly life upon earth.

APPLICATION. Do you realise why until now you have been so far from Christian or religious perfection? It is because the truths and the maxims of the Gospel are not deeply rooted in your soul, because you think about things that are of no importance, and not about those that alone matter. You think only of the present and little or nothing about the future. You are guided in your actions by the impulses of your feelings and by worldly principles, not by the light of faith and of the teaching of Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct me in thy truth and teach me, for thou art God my Saviour.* (Ps. xxiv, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in order that the maxims of the Gospel may be well planted and take root in your soul, you must empty yourselves of so many worldly thoughts and so many earthly affections which are the thorns which will not let the former take root and increase. Moreover it is necessary for you to attend specially to the frequent meditation of those primary and more important maxims of the Gospel, remembering that they all are the teachings of Jesus Christ, the uncreated wisdom Who cannot deceive or be deceived.

APPLICATION. Set yourself seriously to think of this truth, *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?* and upon other

similar truths, and you will gather therefrom great fruit for your soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord, in the land of the living.* (Ps. xxvi, 13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that when once these truths are firmly rooted in your mind, the result will be that your heart will be entirely detached from the base things of this earth and from the deceitful goods of this world, and that your soul will be raised to heavenly things.

APPLICATION. By such detachment will it come to pass that if till now you have been as it were creeping along the ground, you will now become like to the eagle soaring aloft, by your devout affections, towards the Divine Sun and contemplating His beauty. And this is what is meant by those words of the Gospel: *The birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof.* (Matt. xiii, 32.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?* (Ps. liv, 7.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE DIVINE PUNISHMENTS

Fear ye him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. (Luke xii, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what a strange thing it is that you should fear God so little. If some one held you suspended from the top of a high tower so that by the mere opening of his hand you must needs be dashed down into a pit filled with scorpions and with dragons, would you dare at such a crisis to insult or to anger him?

APPLICATION. How then is it that you do not fear by your sins and offences to anger God Who, by the mere withdrawal of His hand from you for a moment, can let you fall into the most awful and terrible depths, *can cast you into hell*? Would you be of the number of those *who provoke God boldly*? (Job xii, 6.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.* (Ps. cxvii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the *gehenna* here means a vast deep pit of fire, where are collected all torments as it were in a centre, and where consequently they attain a greater intensity and a greater bitterness. This is the pit or the abyss into which on the Day of Judgment shall be cast the bodies of all the lost. What unutterable woe will it be for those unhappy beings to remain there for ever amidst suffering so great!

APPLICATION. You also in very truth are hanging over that great abyss, supported only by the hand of God Who could let you fall at any moment. Have you not reason to fear? How many far better than you, perhaps, have there been, who after provoking God's anger against them by their ingratitude, have been permitted by Him to fall into grave sins, and to be cast into that abyss! Often reflect on this if you would learn to fear as you ought.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell.* (Ps. xciii, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that God often inspires you with the fear of this abyss, seeing that you stand so much in need of it, in order that you may be ever watchful and never give Him occasion to forsake you. Remember however that your fear may be of two kinds. You

may fear to sin only because of the punishment, or you may fear the penalty also because of the sin that deserves it. If you fear to sin because of its necessary punishment you do well. This however is only servile fear and consequently one that is less worthy of you. If you would have true filial fear you must dread the pains of hell because of the sins which cannot be separated from it.

APPLICATION. Cultivate all you can this holy and salutary fear. It will grow and increase in you in proportion as the love of God deepens and increases in your heart.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with trembling.* (Ps. ii, 11.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

GOOD EXAMPLE

So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. v, 16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that these words are addressed to all the faithful, because all, as *children of light*, are bound to do their actions in such a way as to edify their neighbour and with the motive of praising God : *Let your modesty be known to all men* says the Apostle. Nevertheless this counsel is especially addressed to ecclesiastics and to religious, who, as God's best-loved children having been *called into His admirable light*, are in duty bound to spread and show forth the glory of their Heavenly Father to the very utmost of their power.

APPLICATION. In what way do you try to give good example to those of your own household and

to others outside ? It is not enough that you should be good yourself. You must give outward proof of your virtue, so as to serve as a light to others by your actions, your demeanour, and by all your words, so that those who see you may praise your Heavenly Father.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast delivered my feet from falling, that I may be pleasing before God in the sight of the living.* (Ps. lv, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that since you are strictly bound by the teaching of Jesus Christ to show good example to all men, so for the same reason you are strictly bound never to do anything that might give cause for scandal or bad example to your neighbour or to bring dishonour to God. Do you not realise what a power bad example has when one openly acts in opposition to his profession of a virtuous life before the eyes of others ? These will thereby encourage themselves to make their own actions even still more at variance with their profession of Christians.

APPLICATION. Often reflect upon this. Remember too the severe words in which our gentle Lord denounces the sin of scandal. In this very chapter of St. Matthew are also read the words : *He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.* (v. 19.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Great peace have they that love thy law ; and for them there is no stumbling block* (*scandalum*). (Ps. cviii, 165.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you should strive to give edification and good example by your conduct, not from any motive of personal glory, but in order *to glorify your Heavenly Father.* God indeed wishes

that others should see your good works, but He does not will that you should do them in order to gain praise. He wishes that they should be seen so that God Who is the author of all good works may Himself be praised.

APPLICATION. What intention have you in the good works which you do? Is it that they may attract the notice of others or only, as it should be, that they may give glory to God?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let all that is within me bless his holy name.* (Ps. cii, 1.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

BEARING REPROACHES

Blessed are ye when they shall revile you.
(Matt. v, 11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how harmful it is for our spiritual or religious life that we should fear the scorn of worldly men who, by their contempt and unkind words, show that they despise him who strives to live well and to act virtuously, as his profession of a Christian demands. *Fear not*, says God by the mouth of the prophet, *the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies* (Isa. li, 7), reminding you that all such trials are caused you only by the impiety of men who must themselves soon pass away, whereas the good which you merit from these their annoyances will never end.

APPLICATION. If then the suffering, be it what it may, passes so quickly and the good that it merits for you lasts for ever, should you not then, instead of fearing these slight trials, even despise them?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn not away thy*

face from thy servant, for I am in trouble. Oh hear me speedily. (Ps. lxviii, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that all these above-mentioned trials arise only from the judgments of others, and from the little esteem they show for you. If then you wish not to stand in fear of these their judgments consider within yourself who these persons are. They are men of wrong, unjust, unstable judgment, who themselves within a very short time will return to dust, and be consumed by worms.

APPLICATION. In order to heed the less all such persons, you may picture them to yourself as possibly lost hereafter in hell, for none are more in danger of going there than those who will neither do good themselves nor allow others to do it. Listen then to them as they cry out full of envy of those whom on earth they once despised: *These are they whom we had some time in derision.* (Wisd. v, 3.) Hence what does it matter if now the wicked despise you, since throughout all eternity they needs must envy you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let me not be confounded for I have called upon thee. Let the wicked be ashamed and be brought down to hell.* (Ps. xxx, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how lovingly God makes known to you the advantages which this scorn if patiently borne will procure for you. One is that it will detach you from the love of creatures, to which you would become too attached if you were praised for your good works. Another, that they will win you the love of your Creator if you are despised because of your service of Him. Even had it brought you the praise of men you would owe it all to Him; but if it brings you shame and contempt, then He deigns to consider Himself indebted to you.

APPLICATION. Behold then how happy you are that God should become so entirely yours when you do good for His sake and have to suffer for it. *If you suffer for the name of Christ you shall be blessed.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Judge me, O Lord my God, according unto thy justice, and let them not rejoice over me.* (Ps. xxxiv, 24.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

GOD OUR FATHER

That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. v, 45.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that there are three ways in which sons may act towards their father, as slaves, as free men or as heirs. The blessed who have entered into the possession of their inheritance may be said to be in the position of heirs, Christians who have been delivered from the slavery of the world in that of free men, and those who are still ground down under its tyranny in that of slaves. The complaint which Our Lord makes by the Prophet: *I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me* (Isa. i, 2) is particularly addressed to Christians, who being dealt with as free men enjoy in a special manner the noble title of children of God.

APPLICATION. Ponder seriously how God as your Father has dealt with you, and the return which you as an ungrateful son have up till now made to Him, that now you may change your mode of life and no longer grieve Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have said: Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High.* (Ps. lxxxi, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY God's extreme loving-kindness towards you He has fed you with the abundance of His spiritual gifts of grace, calling you by many lights and inspirations from a worldly to a better life, providing you with so many helps to piety, in the Holy Sacraments and the good example of others, so that you may live as His true son. He has even raised you up to the likeness and companionship of His only Son, in order that hereafter you may still be nearer to Him in glory and enjoy a more intimate companionship with Him in His Kingdom. *To this are you called that you may inherit a blessing.* (1 Peter iii, 9.)

APPLICATION. May not then God with good reason say to you *I brought up and raised up children*, since as a loving Father He has placed such means at your disposal and has secured for you so glorious a destiny? What more indeed could He have done for you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my father, my God, and the support of my salvation.* (Ps. lxxxviii, 27.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the return that you have so far made, not appreciating as you should so loving a Father, not honouring Him, nay even despising Him by your disobedience to His law. *I raised up children but they have despised me.* Every time that God is offended by the hardened sinner He is also despised, but not so outrageously as when He is offended by a favoured son. The former may often sin through ignorance and inadvertence, being carried away and engulfed in the cares and pleasures of the world. But the latter lives as a child in God's own house, and should have nothing more at heart than to obey and honour Him. Oh how much more reprehensible is his contempt of God!

APPLICATION. Wonder not therefore that God more readily shows His mercy towards the repentant sinner who has offended Him very gravely, than towards those who are guilty of lesser sins, for which however they show but little regret.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As a father hath pity upon his children, so hath the Lord pity upon them that fear him.* (Ps. cii, 13.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

KEEPING CLOSE TO JESUS

He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me. (Matt. x, 38.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how our Lord Jesus Christ died on a public hill outside the city of Jerusalem in order to show that He was dying for the welfare of all mankind, and for His own greater confusion as being there exposed to the sight of all men. Think moreover of your blessed Saviour going forth from the city gate between two thieves, with the heavy cross upon His shoulders, accompanied by the noise not so much of drums and trumpets as of the hisses and insults of an immense rabble, and all this in the broad light of day.

APPLICATION. After such a sight as this will you still yearn to satisfy to the full that ambition for human glory and praise which you so ardently seek?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I had rather be despised in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of sinners.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the strength which the Apostle St. Paul drew from this example of Christ, to go out in public and bear openly the name of Christ. *Let*

us go forth, he says, *with him outside the camp, bearing his reproach.* (Heb. xiii, 13.) He would declare himself a follower of the crucified, which was in those times a name of derision and contempt. In our days the name of Christian alone is no longer a name of contempt, but the name of an exemplary Christian, of a poor, patient, humble and mortified Christian is still a word of reproach. *The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn.* (Job xii, 4.)

APPLICATION. Still you must have the courage to bear even this if you would correspond with all that Christ has deigned to suffer for love of you. You have to bear yourself as a true and faithful follower of the crucified not only in the privacy of your chamber, but you must also go forth into the open, *without the camp*, and if at home or abroad they seem to deride you, it will be with Christ that you are laughed to scorn.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us; for the years in which we have seen evils.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the Apostle invites you to go forth *with him without the camp*, because your chief consolation in accepting insults with gladness is the knowledge that you are closely following and accompanying your Lord to Calvary. You must not even wait for Christ to call you forth from the privacy of your chamber. You must hasten to follow Him by letting those who will despise you. You must prepare your soul for any contempt that may come to you whether from those with whom you live or those outside, from your nearest relations, who will condemn you as either too scrupulous or as more zealous than prudent.

APPLICATION. In the midst of animadversions

such as these remember your Saviour Jesus Christ. Say to yourself : Christ for the love of me went forth to Calvary crushed with ignominy, and can I draw back from following Him faithfully for fear of treatment like to His ? No, that shall never be. *Let us go forth therefore with Him.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.* (Ps. xxiv, 15.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

PROGRESS IN PERFECTION

Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. v, 48.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what the Apostle means when he says you are in all things to grow up in Christ Jesus. (Eph. iv, 15.) It means that you be more resolute in seeking Christ, in following Christ and in embracing the things of Christ. If you are but a beginner, you will do this by forsaking all evil and giving yourself gradually more and more fully to all virtue. If you are a proficient you will try ever more to imitate the virtues of Jesus Christ. If you are among the more perfect you will live more increasingly in union with Him, desiring nothing outside of Him, nothing of the things of this world.

APPLICATION. Enter into yourself and see to which of these states you feel that you yourself belong. Be ashamed if after so many years professing a good and virtuous life you can with difficulty say that you are in the first of them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unto thee have I lifted up mine eyes, O thou who dwellest in the heavens* (Ps. cxxii, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that whenever you do not seek to advance in your state, whether it be that of a beginner, of a proficient or the perfect, you fall away. *Not to advance is to go back.* The reason is because, as soon as you do not try to advance, it is a sign that you already believe yourself to have made sufficient progress. This is in itself to fall away, and to become like to the Pharisee who, thinking himself to have arrived at a perfection beyond that of all other men, was really inferior to the publican who stood behind.

APPLICATION. Cease but to look at the good that you imagine you have done, and turn your attention to that which is wanting to you and which you are in duty bound to perform, and you will then recognise the immense need that you have of advancing. Notice a little how much more so many others have done and still do for God than you. This will serve to put you to confusion and encourage you to advance.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the man whose help is in thee; in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you must grow *in Him in all things*, striving to think always more of Christ, employing your tongue in praising Him, your hands in working and labouring for Him. As the growth of the body requires that all its members should develop in due proportion, so also must it be with the soul. All this will be *doing the truth in charity*, as St. Paul says (ibid.), which means that whatever you think, speak or do, you must do all as perfectly as possible, *doing the truth.* And above all you must do it, as you ought, for the love of God: *in charity.*

APPLICATION. Happy then will you be if this

ardent longing dwell in your heart of *growing up* as you should *in Christ in all things*. May it please God that you may not need to be ever beginning, and that up to now you may not have been always going back rather than forward in imitation of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord keepeth all them that love him.* (Ps. cxliv, 20.)

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY
THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD
(Read Matt. xx, 1–16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that those workmen, who were called at the first hour, are those nations who in the beginning of time lived according to the law of nature; those called at the sixth hour are they who lived under the written law; and those who were called at the last hour are the Apostles and their successors who came in the time of the evangelical law, to live under the law of the Gospel, and to work in the vineyard of the Lord. They were the last in point of time, but the first in the gifts of grace which the incarnate Son of God brought us by His teaching, example, and by the holy sacraments.

APPLICATION. Thank God for His goodness in allowing you to be born under the law of grace. Still more should you thank Him for placing you by birth in the heart of Christianity, and giving you such immense opportunities of so abundantly enjoying His gifts. How many there are among heathen peoples who would serve God more faithfully and better than you do, if they had the helps you have to live as a true Christian!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unto the upright there hath risen up light in the darkness.* (Ps. cxi, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the various calls of the master of the household at morning, at midday, and at the end of the day may also signify to us that our Lord calls some to His service at the earliest dawn of the use of reason, others in youth and others in more advanced years. There are some even whom He calls again and again and at different intervals, for in the excess of His mercy He is desirous to overcome the resistance and obstinacy of their wills by repeated calls to serve Him.

APPLICATION. Think how many times you have resisted our Lord's invitations, when He called you to a better and more perfect life. Acknowledge the mercy He has shown you, since He might have called many others who would have responded more promptly and served Him more faithfully.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O how hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O God!* (Ps. XXXV, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that God does not measure the time or count the years when rewarding those who serve Him. He rather regards their fervour and growth in virtue. Hence it was that the workmen who came at the last hour were made equal to all those who came early and worked longer.

APPLICATION. You count the years of your life and perhaps pride yourself upon your superiority over those who are younger, and expect to enjoy more exemptions and liberty than they. But rather reckon up the virtues and the good habits which you have all this time acquired, *e.g.*, those of mortification, of obedience, and of pure intention in your work. You will doubtless have reason to humble and abase yourself in comparison with many who are only beginners, finding yourself certainly in the number of

the called, but perhaps not of the chosen ones. *Many are called, but few chosen.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast set our iniquities before thine eyes, our life in the light of thy countenance.* (Ps. lxxxix, 8.)

MONDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

LIFE LIKENED TO A RACE

No man looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God (Luke ix, 62.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that this life is likened by St. Paul to the course of a race along which we run towards the goal which is the glory of Paradise. All men are admitted to compete in this race, but how many there are who instead of running elect to stand still! The number of those who do not trouble to take even a step is countless. They remain inert engrossed in idleness, amusements, and worldly possessions.

APPLICATION. When you began a better life, you assuredly aspired and intended to run towards the goal. That however is not enough if you do not strive your very utmost to reach it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have run in the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 32.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY who is this fortunate person who is said to receive the prize in the race. Is it one only of all those who valiantly strive after virtue? Certainly not, for many are they who are saved. But it is only those who persevere. Let us therefore bear in mind how necessary it is not to be remiss, as we may so easily become, in doing good.

APPLICATION. When again you entered on a truly Christian life you began indeed to run, but how soon

you grew tired! Scarcely do you undertake to practise the duties of religion than you begin to grow weary of them. Try to overcome your natural inconstancy, because it is undoubtedly a great danger, and unless overcome is one of the chief signs of belonging to the class of those who will not be chosen.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath rejoiced as a giant to run his course.* (Ps. xviii, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in order to reach the goal it is not enough merely to move towards it, but it is necessary to run perseveringly: *So run that you may obtain.* In the service of God it is not enough to advance leisurely. We must labour, make effort, and advance with all the more energy as we draw nearer the end.

APPLICATION. May God grant that in the pursuit of Christian perfection you may not do rather the contrary. Moreover the Apostle says: *So run.* We must run in the way prescribed and not according to our own will and caprice. You have always to run along the way of the commandments of God and of the Church. You must imitate the example of the good persons who have gone before you. Above all you must follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ Who in this course, *rejoiced as a giant to run the way.* If you do not act after this manner, your running will be like that which St. Augustine describes the running of the pagans to have been: *Great strides but out of the right course.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lead me, O Lord, in thy justice because of mine enemies; direct my way in thy sight.* (Ps. v, 10.)

TUESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE VALUE OF MY SOUL

What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? (Matt. xvi, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Christ here says that all the kingdoms of the world cannot compensate for the loss of one's soul. If we lose our soul, what will it avail us to have possessed for a short time all the glory of the world? Do you imagine that the remembrance of all their earthly pomp and pleasure is any relief to those monarchs who may now be buried in hell? The remembrance of good that is lost only brings sorrow with it. Hence it is that those miserable beings cry out: *What availeth our pride? Or the display of riches what did it avail us?* And yet are not many lost, not because they possessed great kingdoms but for miserably small things, so vile and shameful that we can hardly imagine it? It is not necessary that the devil should promise them *all the kingdoms of the earth.* Some sensual pleasure suffices, or the gaining of a few paltry pence.

APPLICATION. Do you not compassionate so disastrous a ruin? Fear at least your own danger. Run not the risk of losing your soul for some mere caprice or some sudden outburst, for some trifling promise.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my God, my lot is in thy hands.* (Ps. xxx, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Christ not only says that it would avail you nothing to gain all the kingdoms of the earth at the expense of losing your own soul, but moreover that you must not risk the slightest harm or spiritual injury to your soul even to gain all these kingdoms. Consequently you must not sully

your soul, nor harm it by the commission of a single venial sin, although by so doing you should gain all the gold and treasures of the world.

APPLICATION. And yet how little do you fear to commit many venial sins, and even deliberate ones, in order to satisfy some desire or some passion, sins which will only result for you in punishment and ruin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *So shall I always keep thy law; yea for ever and ever.* (Ps. cxviii, 44.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Jesus Christ says further that the acquisition of the whole world will not outweigh the loss to your soul of a single degree of grace and of glory, that you might have gained by the practice of some act of virtue. The very least degree of grace and of glory is worth more than all the kingdoms of the earth. Is there a single act of virtue which you can offer to God, which He will not reward with a recompense infinitely superior to all that the world can promise you? All the goods and treasures of this earth are fleeting, empty, and uncertain, whilst every degree of glory is a treasure infinite in its duration and immense in its greatness.

APPLICATION. To all this you pay but little heed. You neglect every day to avail yourself of the opportunities which arise of performing many good acts, which from time to time you could so easily do. *Therefore*, says the prophet Isaias, *they shall receive double in their land.* (Isa. lxi, 7.) And this land is Paradise.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord will reward me according to my justice, and will repay me according to the cleanness of my hands.* (Ps. xvii, 21.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

DEATH THE GOOD COUNSELLOR

This night do they require thy soul of thee. (Luke xii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that as it was sin which first brought death into the world, so there is no better antidote against sin than the thought of death. All sins have usually their origin in the love of pleasure, or of the riches and honours of this world. Thus then the thought of death which ends all these pleasures, riches and honours, is able to moderate the love of these passing things in the heart of him who seriously thinks upon it. Watch beside the bed of a dying man, and see how all pleasures and enjoyments have passed away and give place to pain, weariness, anguish and agony. Look at him as he lies dead upon the bier and you will see him despoiled of all his riches: *When he shall sleep, he shall take nothing away with him.* (Job xxvii, 19.) Behold him in the grave and you will see all his glory buried with him. *To-day he is lifted up, and to-morrow he shall not be found.* (1 Mac. ii, 63.)

APPLICATION. Does not then the consideration of death suffice to detach you completely from all those satisfactions, conveniences, and paltry honours that you persist in pursuing to the great detriment of your soul? Try to keep constantly before your mind the view and value with which you will regard these things at the moment of death.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I fear no evils, for thou art with me.* (Ps. xxii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how death corrects our errors

and misconceptions about the future. Not only does it make us view the things of this life as small and valueless, but it also reveals to us the greatness and importance of those of the future life which we now so little care about. We are in this world as it were in a chamber full of smoke which prevents our seeing clearly the things which are within, or outside of, it. At the moment of death all this darkness will be cleared away. We shall perceive that all temporal things are only as a dream, which vanish on awaking, and the things of eternity are the only real good or the only real evil. *That which is not eternal is nothing.*

APPLICATION. Take as your rule of conduct to do that which you would wish to have done at the moment of death. *O death, the judgment you inspire is good.* (Ecclus. xli, 3.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My days have gone down like a shadow, and I am withered like the grass.* (Ps. ci, 12.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that at the hour of death, *time shall be no longer.* (Apoc. x, 6.) There will be no time left to correct the errors you have made in your estimation of time and of eternity. Consequently do not now delay to correct them by despising the present. Make it your aim to merit future goods, for death which inevitably comes to every one will surprise you when you least expect it. *For at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.* (Luke xii, 40.)

APPLICATION. If death were to come to your bedside and find you in your present state, would you not wish to have yet a little space of time given you so as to put your conscience in better order? Then do not delay to do so at once, for at that moment *time will be no more.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.* (Ps. cvii, 2.)

THURSDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE WAGES OF SIN AND REWARD OF VIRTUE

No man can serve two masters. (Matt. vi, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that there are two powerful sovereigns, God and the devil. Each of them invites you to enlist under his standard and each proclaims himself most ready to reward you in return. God will repay you for your good works if you attach yourself to His service. The devil also will repay you for your evil deeds, if you will but serve him by using your natural powers and senses as so many weapons of iniquity.

APPLICATION. So it is that the devil will have you use your tongue for detraction, your ears for vanities, your eyes for curiosity, your will for evil suggestions, and so for the rest. But consider well the difference of their rewards. Try to understand it well now so that you may not err in your choice.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Protect me under the shadow of thy wings, from the face of the wicked who have afflicted me.* (Ps. xvi, 8–9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the payment the devil will make you if you serve under him, is none other than death *The wages of sin is death.* (Rom. vi, 23.) He does not give one death only but double payment, the death of guilt and that of punishment, and by hastening on the death of the body also. The soul dies through the guilt of sin, immortal though she be, because it makes her lose God Who is the life of the

soul, just as the soul is the life of the body. Oh deplorable death which deprives the soul of a divine life! And yet it is but just that he who despises his Lord should also lose Him. Such a soul then must, as it merits, be buried in hell, and to this end the devil strives to hasten on the death of the body also.

APPLICATION. As it was through the devil that the death of the body was brought into the world, so he uses all the power allowed him to make it happen the sooner. To how many disasters, disorders and infirmities both of soul and body does not the demon subject him who serves under him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Draw nigh unto my soul and deliver it; save me because of mine enemies.* (Ps. lxviii, 19.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how far better will be the reward of him who enlists in the service of God. He will give you Himself as the life of your soul: *He is thy life and the length of thy days.* (Deut. xxx, 20.) It also will be a double life, one on earth of grace and of spiritual consolations, the other in heaven of glory where for eternity you will possess the joy of God Himself. Remember too that even as the service of the devil causes and hastens the death of the body, so does the service of God lengthen the days of life: *The fear of the Lord shall prolong life.* (Prov. x, 27.)

APPLICATION. Behold therefore the rewards of these two sovereign leaders. Thank our Lord from the depths of your heart for having called you to fight under His standard. But even among those calling themselves followers of Christ there are not wanting those who in reality fight under the standard of the demon. Woe be to you, if to your shame you be one of these.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let thine hand save me for I have chosen thy commandments.* (Ps. cxviii, 173.)

FRIDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY
TAKING UP OUR CROSS

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross. (Matt. xvi, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that for each man, after the loss of innocence and the shipwreck of sin, the cross of penance is the only plank of salvation. It is called the *wood of life* (Prov. iii, 18) because in it alone lies our hope of salvation, and he who does not cling firmly to it will be engulfed and perish. It is as when a ship is going to pieces in mid-ocean, and there is no other hope for the unhappy passengers but to seize some piece of floating wood, for which they struggle among themselves in order to grasp and lay firm hold of it.

APPLICATION. Happy are you if you understand that the cross means all this to you also, and if instead of leaving it to others you go in search of it for yourself. You fail to reflect upon this truth, and so instead of seeking it you push it from you by flying suffering, mortification, humiliation and all that goes to constitute a true penitent. Be assured that just as contemning and flying from the cross is rather a sign of ultimate ruin, so in like manner the embracing of it is a sign of salvation: *It is the tree of life to them that lay hold on it.* (Prov. iii, 18.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold they that depart from thee shall perish.* (Ps. lxxii, 27.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in time of shipwreck it is not enough to seize a plank. One must lay fast hold

of it, for he who has not the courage to struggle against the angry waves will be lost as if he had never grasped the plank at all. And so it is with the cross. Of what avail is it that you lovingly embrace it for a while, if you allow temptations to overcome you and make you abandon it? *Blessed is he who shall retain it.* (Prov. iii, 18.) Oh how many there are who embrace the cross of Christian perfection, but how few who perseveringly hold on to it!

APPLICATION. When God in His mercy called you to a better life, you embraced the cross with courage and perhaps too with joy, even exclaiming with St. Paul: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Gal. vi, 14.) Consider now how far you have persevered in that good sentiment, for it will be of little advantage to you to have embraced the cross if you do not hold fast to it even to the end.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine eyes have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 136.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that these words, *the wood of life*, are rightly applied to the mystery of the cross, because at all times the true wisdom of the faithful consists in loving and embracing the cross of Christ. Should you but remain firm in seeking for nothing but the cross, leaving to others to seek for ease and honour, you would be sure of attaining to paradise and even a high degree of holiness.

APPLICATION. Choose therefore for yourself that which the world rather shuns, after the example set you by Jesus Christ on the cross. Do not doubt then but that you will be carried into port far more securely and with greater ease than the wise and

prudent, the learned and the lettered men of the world.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have inclined my heart to fulfil thine ordinances for ever, because of the reward.* (Ps. cxviii, 112.)

SATURDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

FOLLY OF WORLDLINESS

Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee ; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? (Luke xii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the prosperous sinner, who lives happy in the riches and abundance of this world's goods, is often called in Holy Scripture by the name of fool. And well does he deserve this name, for being in the position to purchase for himself the glory of paradise and to show his gratitude to his divine benefactor, by giving part of his goods to the poor and in using them for other good purposes, he on the contrary only disposes of them to offend his Lord more grievously and merit for himself more rigorous punishment.

APPLICATION. Look well into your heart and see if there lurks therein any envy for such a truly pitiable form of happiness, which merits rather your deepest commiseration.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Understand, ye unwise among the people, and ye fools be wise at last.* (Ps. xciii, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how our Lord concludes this parable of the rich man by saying, *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God* (ibid. 21). What then will the boasting of riches avail him at such a moment ? What folly therefore to be

dazzled by the apparent happiness of such fools and to be enamoured of their false prosperity! *Envy not the man who prospers in his way.* (Ps. xxxvi, 7.) The seeming happiness of the sinner is no good sign, and when continuous it is a worse sign still. It is often a proof that God bears with the bad man in this life, and will punish him more severely in the next.

APPLICATION. It follows in consequence that the more such a one seems to you deserving of being envied for his flow of prosperity, the less you should envy him, reflecting on the doom which awaits him: *As the flower of the grass shall he pass away.* (James i, 10.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The senseless and the fool shall perish together, and they shall leave their riches to strangers.* (Ps. xlviii, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, what is said in the Book of Proverbs (i, 32): *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* So it will be with those who lay up treasures for themselves. Riches have abounded, their hearts were set upon them and lo! in a moment they are all come to naught. There remains only the bitter regret: *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?* (Wisd. v, 8.)

APPLICATION. When therefore you see men in the midst of their pomp and grandeur, repeat to yourself: *Envy not the glory and riches of a sinner: for thou knowest not what his ruin shall be.* (Ecclus. ix, 16.) Run not the risk of becoming affected towards or of envying their false happiness and wretched prosperity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.* (Ps. lxi, 11.)

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY
THE SOWER AND THE SEED
(Read Luke viii, 4–15.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that this earth of ours can never produce anything of itself but thorns and briars, if it be not ploughed and worked by the husbandman. So too the ground of your heart is incapable by itself of producing the smallest act of virtue, if the divine husbandman does not sow in it the heavenly seed of His grace. Had you acquired more habits of virtue than the greatest saint the world has ever possessed, you would not of yourself be able to conceive even a single good thought without the actual help of divine grace.

APPLICATION. This certain truth of faith you must retain vividly impressed upon your mind, in order to preserve humility and to have recourse more ardently and more frequently to the help of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I stretched forth my hands unto thee; my soul gaspeth unto thee, as a land where no water is.* (Ps. cxlii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the divine husbandman never ceases to sow His heavenly seed in our hearts, sometimes more and sometimes less, to the end that it may bring forth a harvest of virtue. This seed consists in those lights which illuminate our mind, in those movements and interior inspirations of the heart, in good examples, in sermons and in familiar conversations by which the will is animated and stimulated to the practice of virtue.

APPLICATION. Reflect here upon the many spiritual lights, inspirations and helps which God has lavished on you up to the present moment. See how far

you have corresponded, because you can only blame yourself for the scanty fruit produced thereby.

Affections and resolutions. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?* (Ps. xxvi, 1.)

Consider thirdly what has been the chief reason why you have lost the fruit of so much good seed. It can be easily reduced to the three impediments spoken of in the Gospel. - First, *some fell by the wayside.* You have lived with your heart open as the public way to every thought and affection towards creatures, thus leaving no room for divine inspirations for which your heart should be always kept guarded and ready. Second, *some fell upon a rock: and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.* Your heart has become hardened by careless habits, and you do not seek to soften it with piety and intercourse with God in prayer. Third, *other some fell among thorns.* Your heart resembles a bush thick with thorns, choked up by too much solicitude for the things of earth, for your pursuits, your employments, and still more perhaps for superfluous amusements and useless cares.

Application. Keep guard over your heart, attend resolutely to your religious practices and be persuaded that the things of eternity are the only ones of importance. In this way will the seed of the heavenly husbandman bear and bring forth good fruit in you.

Affections and resolutions. *The Lord shall give goodness, and our earth shall yield her fruit.* (Ps. lxxxiv, 13.)

MONDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY
CHRIST OR LUCIFER

If God were your father, you would indeed love me. . . . You are of your father the devil. (John viii, 42–44.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the devil invites all, and that with a special insistence, to live at their ease and procure for themselves pleasure and amusements regardless of God and the ruin of their own souls. Our Lord, on the contrary, lovingly and urgently invites all to penance, to mortification and to His holy cross.

APPLICATION. Now which of these two invitations do you wish to accept? In holy baptism, and still more so by your Christian profession, you have renounced that of the devil in order to give yourself wholly to the following of Christ. But what is to be said of you, if you are found to be of the number of those who turn their backs on our Lord and give themselves up to the pursuit of ease, of pleasures and honours according to the dictates of Lucifer?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God, and defend me from them that rise up against me.* (Ps. lviii, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how different is the fruit gathered by the followers of Christ, and those who follow the invitation of Lucifer. Jesus invites to the cross of humiliations and of mortification, but He gives the help of divine grace to overcome the repugnance of corrupt nature. He sweetens all the bitterness with spiritual consolations and the peace of a good conscience, so that all the joys of the world are not so delightful as the tears shed at the feet of Jesus crucified. Lucifer, on the other hand, whilst inviting to pleasure, in reality makes his followers feel only thorns and

anguish. He mingles with that atom of sweetness which he proffers them so much anxiety of mind, that all his comforts avail not to dissipate the continual torment of their souls.

APPLICATION. Could you but enter into the heart of one, who forgetful of his Christian profession has let himself be allured by the seductions of the devil, how far more full of bitterness and discontent you would find him, than him who is careful to mortify himself and to embrace the cross of Christ!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Great peace have they that love thy law, and for them there is no stumbling-block.* (Ps. cxviii, 165.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the recompense which, at the end of life, is received by those who follow the invitation of Lucifer and those who follow the invitation of Christ. The former after having treated his followers so ill during life offers them nothing but flames after death. The Gabaonites crucified their enemies alive, and when dead they burned them. The devil does the same. Jesus on the contrary gives His followers whilst on earth a life of grace sweetened by a thousand spiritual consolations, and afterwards a life of glory, an eternal life, a life in which they are plunged in an ocean of happiness. *I am come that they may have life*, a life of grace now, *and that they may have it more abundantly*. (John x, 10.)

APPLICATION. Will you not then make a firm resolve to renounce entirely the following of the devil, and seriously to place yourself on the side of Christ, consecrating yourself wholly to His divine will?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set me, O Lord, a law in thy way, and guide me in the right path, because of my enemies.* (Ps. xxvi, 11.)

TUESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LOST

Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the exterior darkness. (Matt. xxii, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the damned in hell are threatened with darkness, and that of two kinds, interior and exterior. The exterior darkness will be a pain of sense, and will be most grievous both as to place and its disposition and also from its very nature. Regarding the place, this will be the furthest possible removed from heaven, like unto a sepulchre without even the least gleam of light: *And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them.* (Num. xvi, 33.) As to its disposition, the bodies of the damned will abide there heaped and massed up in such a manner that they can never move from that spot: *I have trodden them down in my wrath.* (Isa. lxiii, 3.) Lastly, as to the nature of this darkness, the bottom of this sepulchre will be a lake of burning sulphur: *the pool of fire, burning with brimstone* (Apoc. xix, 20), sending forth volumes of most terrible flames mixed with smoke like unto a very storm of darkness.

APPLICATION. What would be your feelings were you to find yourself in that place? How much better now to live in the strictness of a good life in order that you may never come to fall therein!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *This their way is ruin . . . they are laid in hell like sheep; death shall feed upon them.* (Ps. xlviii, 14–15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the interior darkness which will fill the souls of the lost. It will proceed first of all from the privation of all divine light; secondly, from the fearful torments endured, which will prevent

their minds from ever thinking of anything else; thirdly, from the passions which will oppress the intellect and the will. A great passion of anger alone suffices to overcome a wise man. What then will be the implacable hatred of the damned against God, Whom they will blaspheme and hate without ever humbling themselves before Him, though they are themselves reduced to so abject a state?

APPLICATION. Humble yourself now before God so that you may never come to find yourself in conditions so pitiable.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the most violent storms are of short duration, but that of the damned will be eternal. *And he shall never see light.* (Ps. xlviii, 20.) Even during one sleepless night in the darkness you cannot bear to keep in one and the same position. How then will you endure to stay bound down amidst fire and horrible darkness, without any hope of escaping from it or of seeing light again for all eternity?

APPLICATION. If you would not find yourself hereafter in that darkness, do not now close your eyes to the light of the inspirations of God and of the gospel truth, to avoid seeing the obligations of your state of life. If you are now a friend of darkness you are also a co-operator in your own damnation. And how many there are who, having professed themselves Christians, are now buried in eternal darkness because *they loved darkness rather than light*! (John iii, 19.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enlighten mine eyes that I sleep not ever in death.* (Ps. xii, 5.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE NARROW GATE

Strive to enter by the narrow gate ; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. (Luke xiii, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that to enter heaven by the narrow gate is not as easy as might at first appear. Christ tells us that we must use violence. He uses the word *fight* to denote the struggle and conflict there must be between the spirit and the flesh. The latter wishes not to pass through so narrow a door as that of mortification, penance, humility and obedience, but the spirit sees that we must needs pass thereby, since there is no other door to enter paradise than that through which Christ Himself has passed. Hence it is that there is always struggle and combat between them, so much so that one may often endure much anguish.

APPLICATION. Therefore it is necessary that you should fight with a great heart and manfully, seeing that there is so much at stake. Happy is your lot if you enter by the narrow gate and truly miserable if by any other.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *This is the gate of the Lord, the just shall enter into it.* (Ps. cxvii, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that when you entered on a better life, helped by the grace of God, you fought bravely in separating yourself from all those things that endangered perseverance. But in order to gain heaven this is not enough, as it has not proved sufficient for the many who have not continued fighting to the end. Discouraged by the continual opposition and contradictions of their senses, they grew tired and

despaired of victory. And so after having achieved many victories over their enemies, they have finally missed the gate of heaven.

APPLICATION. If you do not wish to fall into the same dreadful misfortune, you also must continue to fight to the very end.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* (Ps. xxvi, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that when a man begins to neglect to fight and to struggle in order to enter heaven, he will not be able to take up the combat again when he may wish to : *They shall seek to enter and shall not be able.* (Luke xiii, 24.) After having laid down his arms and allowed the senses to win too many victories, he will no longer know how to fight when he desires that the spirit should gain the mastery. He will find himself enervated by the force of habit, and wanting in those strong graces which he needs to achieve the victory.

APPLICATION. The easiest and surest manner then of fighting to the end, is to keep the spirit accustomed to combat continually against the senses. In this way only will victory be secured on all occasions. *Vince teipsum.* Overcome yourself in all that your inferior nature would refuse to the dictates of reason and to the will of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have cried unto God, and the Lord will save me.* (Ps. liv, 17.)

THURSDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

ADVANCE IN GOOD

No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke ix, 62.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what Christ meant to teach the young man who wished to follow Him in the apostolate, but asked leave first to acquaint his relatives and to set in order his family affairs: *No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* In the first place He meant to say that whoever would put his hand to the plough, that is to say, whoever wishes to follow Christ, which is an effort as trying to our corrupt nature as ploughing the ground is for the husbandman, will not thereby be fit for the Kingdom of Christ on earth, in which there is constant labour, nor for the Kingdom of Christ in heaven, where there is only joy, unless he embraces this effort with generosity. He must set his face against all blame for so doing; he must despise all human respect. It is an enterprise that requires resolute souls, such as are detached from earthly things and despise all that the world most esteems.

APPLICATION. When you began a better life, for what end, and from what motive did you do so? Was it really to follow Christ and to cultivate in your soul, and in the souls of your neighbours, the virtues He taught, or was it rather for human motives and interests? If for the former and to labour in His Kingdom, then thank God and continue as you have begun; if for the latter acknowledge now your error and make amends for it, by resolving earnestly not to have any other wish in life except to serve Christ and to labour for His glory.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct thou the works of our hands over us; yea, the work of our hands do thou direct.* (Ps. lxxxix, 17.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ also intended to convey by these words, that such a one is not fit for the kingdom of Heaven who, after putting his hand to the plough and having generously begun a better life, does not remain firm in the pursuit of his holy enterprise, who does not persevere in his good resolutions, but who again falls away either from inconstancy, cowardice or sloth.

APPLICATION. Reflect seriously on the good resolutions you have heretofore made, in order that you may be fit for the Kingdom of Christ, and see how far you have kept them. It will avail you little to have promised and not to fulfil, to have begun and not to persevere. You began with fervour and now you proceed with tepidity. Fear lest there be verified in you:—*Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.* (Apoc. iii, 16.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set me O Lord a law in thy way, and guide me in the right path.* (Ps. xxvi, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ by these words signified chiefly that no one is fit for His Kingdom, who takes back again what he has once abandoned for God. This looking back and turning back is not only applicable to those who entirely abandon a good life and return to one of sin: *vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction.* (Rom. ix, 22.) It likewise means those who remain attached to the things which they have once given up for God, and go back to them in desire and affection.

APPLICATION. Consequently persevere with a courageous heart in God's service, cutting yourself off from all inordinate affection and attachment to earthly or dangerous objects. Thus you will be fit for the Kingdom of Christ upon earth by your virtuous life, and fit for the Kingdom of Christ in heaven in enjoyment of the fruit of your good works.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Our heart hath not turned back, neither hast thou turned aside our steps from thy way.* (Ps. xliii, 19.)

FRIDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE GOOD OF SUFFERINGS

The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? (John xviii, 11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Christ in addressing these words to St. Peter who wished to defend Him in the garden of Gethsemane, teaches you the reply you should give your rebellious senses, when they incline you not to receive with readiness the tribulation which God sends you. First of all our Lord lessens the dread of a suffering, which was so awful that it was called by the prophets a sea and a deluge, by calling it a chalice.

APPLICATION. So when God sends you some humiliation or affront or infirmity, instead of dwelling on the reasons which make the trial appear greater than it really is, you should on the contrary try to make it seem as light and small as a chalice. Christ looked upon His terrible passion as a small chalice in comparison with His intense desire to suffer for you. Try also to have some love of suffering for Christ, and then every great trial will seem to you only as a chalice. Or again, by weighing it with the sins you have com-

mitted, with the grace that comforts and helps you, and the glory that is to crown you, it will appear to you as exceedingly light.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are just, and in thy truth thou hast humbled me. O let thy mercy be my comfort.* (Ps. cxviii, 75–76.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Christ said that the chalice had been given Him not by Judas, not by His enemies the Jews, but by His own beloved Father: *which my Father hath given me.* This was to teach you that, in your troubles, you must not stop to think of your adversary or of the immediate cause of your trouble. You must raise your eyes to your most loving Father who has arranged all for your good, and Who acts like a true father even when He corrects you: *For whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth; and as a father in the son he pleaseth himself.* (Prov. iii, 12.) Observe also that Christ did not say *the chalice which my Father gives*, but *the chalice which my Father gave*, in order that you might understand that this trial was intended for you by God when He destined you to eternal glory, and that it was to be a means to attain that glory.

APPLICATION. If then you evade or refuse an occasion of suffering, you may be opposing the will of God in your regard and even be exposing your soul to danger. Salvation must depend more upon suffering than on anything else. *All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful.* (Judith viii, 23.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.* (Ps. xc, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Christ said: *Shall I not*

drink it? to show us that His passion was a remedial chalice not indeed for Himself but for us, which would presently have an end. So too that trial which is sent you by God is a remedy which also will soon end. At the moment of taking a remedy you taste all the bitterness of it, but this passes away and health is restored. How long will this suffering last? A few years, a few months, a few days, and the salvation which it secures for you will be eternal.

APPLICATION. Receive then the chalice from the hands of your Father and courageously drink of it, because though bitter it is a wholesome and salutary draught, giving life and that life eternal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let me know that this is thy hand, and that thou, O Lord, hast done it.* (Ps. cviii. 27.)

SATURDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

PREPAREDNESS FOR DEATH

If the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch. (Luke xii, 39.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Lord encourages you to be watchful against His coming, and if He threatens it is only because He would not that death should take you by surprise. If unfortunately death should come upon you and find you unprepared, it will be your own fault. He warns you that He will come at the moment you least expect, in order that you may in the best interests of your soul watch for Him at every hour.

APPLICATION. How little do you reflect on all this. It is just as if the threat that he who is not watchful will be taken by surprise, were made for others and not for you.

Affections and resolutions. *Who is the man that shall live and shall not see death?* (Ps. lxxxviii, 49.)

Consider secondly how our Lord warns you also in the Apocalypse (iii, 3) that He will come upon you in death like a thief when you least expect Him, and He adds: *thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee.* Why therefore does He speak thus? To make you understand that, when He comes thus as the unexpected thief, you will not even perceive His arrival and no one will tell you. Physicians and all of your household He will so take by surprise that no one will say to you: Behold here is the thief!

Application. Know you not that numbers die suddenly by accident and even without realising that they are dying. Even so our Lord warns you that this may happen to you also. A sudden death may be the chastisement of the man who fails to watch, though he has been frequently warned to do so.

Affections and resolutions. *Except ye be converted he will brandish his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready, and in it he hath prepared the instruments of death.* (Ps. vii, 14–15.)

Consider thirdly that, if you are really watchful and expecting your Lord, He will not come to you as a thief but rather as a friend. You will be living detached from all inordinate affection to the things of earth, so that at death He will not have to divest you of temporal and mere worldly things, but will give you those that are heavenly and eternal.

Application. Let therefore your soul be at all times prepared for the coming of your Lord. Watch over your heart that it may not be drawn away and become attached to perishable things, so that at your

death Christ may come to you, not as an unexpected thief, but rather as a long expected friend.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For thee my soul hath thirsted; for thee my flesh longeth, O how exceedingly.* (Ps. lxii, 2.)

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY
THE BLIND MAN OF JERICHO
(Read Luke xviii, 31–43.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how your soul is represented in this poor blind man of Jericho who sat by the public roadside, begging the passers by to give him something whereby to sustain his life. So also is it with you. You are blind to divine things and to the eternal truths, and are wilfully so because you apply your mind but little to them, being altogether intent on those of this present life. You are weak in will and in virtue, since till now you have sat carelessly, not taking a single step towards a better life. You have been begging from creatures the satisfaction of all your desires.

APPLICATION. Acknowledge and deplore your own wretchedness. Humbly beg of God to give you grace to arouse yourself from so deplorable a state.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord is careful of me.* (Ps. xxxix, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the only hope which the blind man of Jericho could entertain was to have recourse to Jesus with confidence, courageously ignoring the reproaches that were uttered against him and the difficulties placed in his way. *They rebuked him that he should hold his peace.* But he, raising his voice, *cried out much more: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.*

APPLICATION. You also in order to be freed from your miseries must have recourse to the infinite goodness of God. But to do this you too will have many difficulties to meet with, much opposition to overcome. You have to conquer the tumultuous passions within you, the numerous difficulties from without, made by your friends in their pretended love for you. You have to resist the inclinations of your senses, the attractions of the world, the temptations of the devil. Above all you have to cast off the evil habits you have contracted, like the blind man: *who casting off his garment leaped up.* (Mark x, 50.) Remain but firm against all these attacks and persevere in imploring God's help, and your prayer also will certainly be heard.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor and needy, help me. Thou art my helper and my deliverer, O Lord make no delay.* (Ps. lxix, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what Christ said to the blind man: *What wilt thou that I do to thee?* showing by these words His willingness to grant him any favour. Imagine that our Blessed Lord addresses the same question to you, wishing to give you more than you can desire. But He would have you also ask and merit the grace by your faith and by your persevering prayer, so that He may have occasion to say to you as He said to the blind man: *Thy faith hath made thee whole.*

APPLICATION. The blind man asked but for his sight as a sure remedy for all. You should above all implore Him to enlighten your mind, this being the surest way of correcting your faults and of following in the footsteps of Christ, even as did the blind man in to-day's gospel who, as we read, *followed him, glorifying God.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Open thou mine eyes, and I shall see the wondrous things of thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 18.)

MONDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY
ON NOT TAKING SCANDAL

You cannot serve God and Mammon. (Matt. vi, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that a good and useful practice, for one who wishes to live a truly Christian life, is the observance of that counsel which God gave His people when they were going into the captivity of Babylon. You, He said, on entering the city will see it full of false gods, borne in triumph through the public streets by a foolish people. Let not yourselves be seduced into even thinking of venerating them, but remember that I am the true God. Worship me therefore in the depths of your heart. (Baruch vi, 2–4.)

APPLICATION. You too will encounter your difficulties in remaining faithful to the maxims of our holy faith, amidst so many who speak and act at variance with it, one in pursuit of pleasure, another of money, another of honour. It is within yourself that you must correct the error by which these are deceived, and promise that it is Christ only you will adore, poor and hanging on the cross. Beware lest the evil example of others pervert your mind, so that you come to despise the good which is true and eternal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How good is God to Israel, unto them that are of an upright heart.* (Ps. lxxii, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what a force for perversion from the better way is the example of the many and powerful who worship present goods. It may not be

difficult for you to despise the false judgments of utter worldliness, but oh, how difficult it may be to despise those of persons who are living with you, some of whom are your inferiors in age, and gifts, while others are your superiors. How often it will happen that the very persons who should help you to live a more perfect life lead you on to worship the vanities of the world.

APPLICATION. No matter then who they are who are inordinately attached to this world's goods, you must set your face against all such vanity and fight courageously against the error of the many, even as Tobias did on seeing the people adore the idols of Jeroboam, when *all went to the golden calves, he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem, to the temple of the Lord and there adored the Lord God of Israel.* (Tob. i, 5–6.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As for me I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple.* (Ps. v, 8–9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how you should act, having before you the example of persons so misguided. To oppose them openly might be for you an enterprise too difficult, but in your heart at least you must remain firm against their maxims. *Say you in your heart: Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord.* (Bar. vi, 5.)

APPLICATION. This then you must do, not once only, but whensoever the bad example of behaviour or of conversation might draw you away to vanities. Thus act promptly as occasion may arise, and it will serve to keep you faithful in not abandoning the true God for an idol that is false.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord, and who hath not had regard to vanities and lying follies.* (Ps. xxxix, 5.)

TUESDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE MISERY OF THE WICKED

The rich man also died, and he was buried in hell. (Luke xvi, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how little the joy of the wicked in this world is to be envied. Who amongst them can boast of having tasted contentment even for a single year? And in a whole year they will hardly have enjoyed one single day. They have passed their days in feasting and in rioting; but meantime how much bitterness has been continually their portion in the pursuit of the satisfaction of their desires.

APPLICATION. This bitterness is far more galling than anything to be met with in a virtuous life. Were there nothing more than the torment of their conscience, this alone would render them miserable. Surely pity rather than envy them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known.* (Ps. xiii, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what holy Job said of such men: *They pass their days in wealth, in a moment they go down to hell.* (Job xxi, 13.) By a long sorrowful vigil they pay for the brief enjoyment they have senselessly given themselves on earth. How far more desirable were it to pass one's days here in prayer, in penance, and in poverty, so as to enjoy the eternal

feast hereafter, rather than after tasting a few days' enjoyment in this world to pass to so terrible and endless a state of misery.

APPLICATION. And so it will be with those who indulged their proud inclinations. They will become the eternal slaves of Satan bound down in fetters and chains. Those who yielded to avarice during life will then find themselves in the most miserable poverty, deprived of every joy and comfort. They who here indulged gluttony will suffer an uninterrupted fast. Those who indulged their bodily senses will be tormented with fire, a prey to a thousand kinds of torture, and this for an endless term. Consider therefore well whether it be worth while to make festival, that must be followed by consequences so terrible and eternal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I thought upon the days of old and I had in my mind the eternal years.* (Ps. lxxvi, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that to add to these awful evils we are told this sad change will be the work of a moment: *in a moment they go down to hell.* How much more fearful then will be made the sudden change from laughter to tears, from merriment to suffering, from self-indulgence to torment? It is also well said that: *in a moment they go down to hell.* Frequently in the very midst of these entertainments they are carried off by sudden death. Perhaps even under the very weight of their iniquities and in the midst of their diversions, they are cast down straight into hell, without even time to look to themselves, and fall into that awful prison almost without knowing that they are falling into it.

APPLICATION. Realise as best you can the misery

of these worldly people, and thank God for the better life to which in His mercy He has called you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Is not their exaltation cut down, and hath not fire destroyed the remnants of them?* (Job xxii, 20.)

ASH WEDNESDAY

THE SPIRIT OF LENT

Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance. (Matt. iii, 8.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that God made man immortal in his soul, and as regards his body: *God created man incorruptible.* (Wisd. ii, 23.) He enriched him with grace and original justice, in consequence of which he enjoyed full dominion over his passions and over all creatures, and so he would after a short time have passed from the earthly paradise to be eternally happy with God in that of heaven. When however Adam disobeyed the divine precept, he was deprived of all these gifts and condemned for nine hundred years to the most bitter penance for his sin, but even this would not have sufficed to efface his guilt without the infinite merits of our Blessed Redeemer.

APPLICATION. As often as you have sinned so often have you repeated all the evil which Adam did himself and all his posterity. For all these sins what penance have you done up to now? As the merits of Christ sufficed not to expiate original sin without Adam's penance, neither will they be sufficient to atone for your faults without your penance also. Begin at least now in these days of Lent, which is a time of penance.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have declared my life unto thee; thou hast set my tears in thy sight* (Ps. lv, 9.)

Consider secondly that just as rebels are not only despoiled of their property and condemned to punishment, but that their very dwellings are overthrown, so in the same manner Adam's earthly habitation, that is to say his body, was condemned to be destroyed by death and to return to dust. Remember man, *dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.* (Gen. iii, 19.)

Application. You also as a child of Adam and an heir to his ills are condemned to die, and doubly condemned on account of your own sins. How is it possible then that you can think so seldom of death, and live as much attached to the earth as if you were never to leave it? Think about your last journey, and think of it often. In this way death, which has been imposed upon man as a chastisement for his faults, will by the remembrance of it during life keep you from falling into fresh faults.

Affections and resolutions. *Remember what my substance is, for hast thou made all the children of men in vain? Who is the man that shall live and shall not see death?* (Ps. lxxxviii, 47–48.)

Consider thirdly how Holy Church on this solemn day sprinkles ashes on your head, and this for two reasons. The first is to remind you more vividly that in a short time you will have to leave this world, and your body will be reduced to ashes and become the food for loathsome worms. The second is that you may learn to despise present and transitory things, and that you may provide for those that are future and eternal, by satisfying the divine justice and doing penance for your sins.

Application. Therefore *memento mori*, remember death and that you have to die. Do not pass a single

day without thinking seriously of the shortness of life, of the certainty of death which is ever hanging over you and of an eternity for ever either happy or miserable that awaits you after death. *Remember thy last end.* (Ecclus. vii, 40.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn then, O Lord, and deliver my soul; O save me for thy mercy's sake, for in death there is no one that is mindful of thee.* (Ps. vi, 5–6.)

THURSDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

TO GETHSEMANE

But that the world may know, that I love the Father: Arise, let us go hence. (John xiv, 31.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when the hour had come for Jesus to go to the garden of Gethsemane to begin His sorrowful Passion, He spoke these words to His disciples: *But that the world may know, that I love the Father: arise, let us go hence.* As if He would say, in order that it may be manifest that I love my Heavenly Father with my entire heart, let us go quickly to execute what He has commanded Me: *Arise, let us go hence.* Hereby our Lord would give us to understand that the love of God does not consist in tender emotions or in tears, but in the prompt and joyful acceptance of sufferings, ignominy, and crosses for His glory.

APPLICATION. Would you also know whether you really love God? See if you are ready to do the most difficult things commanded or given you to do. See too whether you seize opportunities of undertaking some laborious work for the glory of God, of bearing some infirmity of body or some slight upon your repu-

tation, encouraging yourself by saying: Cheerfully will I meet this suffering or do this work, *that the world may know that I love the Father.* In this way may you be assured that you love God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How have I loved thy law, O Lord, it is my meditation all the day long.* (Ps. cxviii, 97.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Christ before entering the garden of Gethsemane, foretold to the Apostles the scandal that they would receive from His passion: *All you shall be scandalised in me this night.* (Matt. xxvi, 31.) Very specially did Jesus address those words to St. Peter, who being the most fervent of all declared himself ready to follow our Blessed Lord and to die with Him: *Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.* (Luke xxii, 33.) Although our Lord warned him that he would not only abandon Him, but also deny Him three times, the Apostle persisted in believing rather what his own fervour dictated than what his Divine Master foretold. Hence we must not trust too much our good resolutions, which sometimes are very fervent in prayer but weak in the hour of temptation.

APPLICATION. As often as you feel during this holy time in your heart a lively desire to go with Jesus to Calvary, ask Him humbly and fervently to give you grace to be faithful, acknowledging that without His assistance you will abandon Him more basely even than Peter did.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Arise, O Lord, and help us, and redeem us for thy name's sake.* (Ps. xliii, 26.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what our Lord added when speaking to Peter and to those who were with him:

Behold satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. (Luke xxii, 31.) This would Satan especially do in the hour of their Master's passion, that so they should forsake Him. The devil acts in a similar manner with us. Never does he give himself more trouble to draw us away from good and tempt us to evil, than when he sees us most desirous and anxious to do great things and suffer much for God.

APPLICATION. Therefore, instead of presuming on your good desires, you must the more diligently have recourse to prayer. You must be the more humble in recommending your soul to God, according to the advice which our Lord gave His apostles: *Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He was mindful of us in our affliction, for his mercy endureth for ever.* (Ps. CXXXV, 23.)

FRIDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

ARRIVAL AT GETHSEMANE

He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. (Matt. xxvi, 37.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Blessed Lord showed Himself more desirous to drink the chalice of His Sacred Passion than of all else: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised: and how am I straightened until it be accomplished?* (Luke xii, 50.) Nevertheless when the hour of His passion arrived, He was seized in the garden by a very storm of terror, of fear, of weariness and of sadness. And why all this? Jesus might have kept far from His sacred humanity such overwhelming emotions, and have met death more joyfully than those martyrs who rejoiced in the

midst of their torments. But no! He willed to suffer this violent anguish for our instruction and profit, to teach us that, within, a man may suffer the most terrible onslaught of anguish, whilst at the same time he possesses his soul in great virtue and so in peace.

APPLICATION. You desire, for instance, to perform some act of humility, of charity, or of some other virtue, but being surprised by a feeling of great repugnance towards that act you get confused, disturbed, and think you have lost the merit of your holy desire. But it is not so. On the contrary this is the time to practise real virtue. For virtue does not consist in the tranquillity of our passions but in the firm resolution of the will, and in overcoming the impulses of our corrupt nature. This is why Jesus encourages you with His example to overcome them. No one was ever attacked by such violent feelings as those which Jesus overcame, when He went forth to meet the death of the cross for you. Does not this then suffice to encourage you to overcome the repugnances of your rebellious nature?—all the more so because our Blessed Lord has so merited for you special helps for you to come forth victorious. When therefore you feel yourself assailed by violent temptation, think at once of Jesus suffering in the garden. Learn by the example of your chieftain the way to fight so as to carry off the victory.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I fear no evils, for thou art with me.* (Ps. xxii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Jesus, oppressed by suffering and prostrate on the ground, besought His Divine Father for help and comfort. It was not because He was unable of Himself to remove this internal anguish,

but in order to teach you where you must have recourse for help against the attacks of your enemies. In those moments of depression and sadness, you will not be able to pray with fervour nor implore God devoutly, but that is not necessary. Jesus even during His three hours' prayer to His Father made no other prayer than to repeat the words: *let this chalice pass from me: Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

APPLICATION. Did you but know what strength and merit there is, when in the midst of internal desolation, in having recourse to God in prayer with humility and resignation, you would desire rather to spend one half hour in prayer in time of spiritual dryness, than many hours in the midst of consolation of spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In my affliction I called upon the Lord, and I cried unto my God, and he heard me from his holy temple.* (Ps. xvii, 7.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how our Blessed Saviour at the very height of His interior sadness forgets not His disciples, nor neglects to warn them of their danger, to reprove their slothfulness and to exhort them to pray.

APPLICATION. When you are tried by temptation, you immediately leave off what would prove to be your best help. You give up prayer and works of charity, whereas that is the very time to act with more merit and with greater virtue. When in the midst of consolation you act well you are then pleasing yourself. But when, notwithstanding the bitterness of soul which you endure, you act well, you please God and are then practising great virtue.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He saw when they were afflicted and he heard their prayer.* (Ps. cv, 44.)

SATURDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

My soul is sorrowful even unto death. (Mark xiv, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the three principal causes of the interior sufferings of Jesus in the garden. The first was to see arrayed before Him at a glance all the tortures and intolerable pains, all the contumely and insults, which He was to endure during the time of His approaching passion and death on the cross. Thus, finding Himself deprived of all consolation, His soul was seized with an unutterable horror at the ocean of anguish which assailed it.

APPLICATION. When you see Jesus plunged in such bitter grief for love of you, will you not compassionate Him with true and loving tenderness? Thank Him at least for the inward sadness and affliction which for your sake He suffers, and let not those interior trials which sometimes afflict you in His service seem to you too heavy to be borne.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul.* (Ps. lxviii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that another cause of the interior anguish of Jesus, was the affliction He endured at seeing clearly the enormity of the offences committed by men against His divine Father. As His love for His divine Father was unbounded, so likewise was the grief He suffered at beholding Him offended by us, especially since He, Who had made Himself our surety, was afflicted and grieved at our sins as if they had been His own. It was His divine will that this interior agony and affliction should be

in proportion to the number and gravity of the sins of every kind, by which God was so grievously offended by mankind, and that all should behold in Him One who would adequately atone and grieve for so much wickedness.

APPLICATION. Never can you sufficiently detest your own sins, because you can never know the depths of their malice. Learn from Jesus to sorrow and grieve for them as you ought, and in expiation for them offer your imperfect sorrow in union with the grief of this your Redeemer.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine eyes have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 136.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY a further cause of this sadness of our Blessed Lord, namely the sight of the vast multitude of men for whom His passion and death would be useless by reason of their malice and wickedness. He also beheld the large number of those, for whom it would be less efficacious and fruitful, because of their tepidity in corresponding to the helps and graces which He merited for us. This grief and affliction was all pure suffering for Him, because unattended by the consolation of some good either for the glory of His Heavenly Father or for our welfare.

APPLICATION. To what extent have you added to the agony of Jesus by your ingratitude and lukewarmness? Is it possible that, instead of sharing the grief of Jesus and the sufferings He bore for you in the garden, you rather increase them by your sinful and careless way of life? As then you have added to the inward affliction of Jesus by your faults, even so you can give Him some relief by a fervent life and

thus render the merits of His most sacred passion more fruitful to your own soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy words have I hidden within my heart, that I may not sin against thee.* (Ps. cxviii, 11.)

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST
(Read Matt. iv, 1–11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the spirit which led Christ into the desert where Lucifer had designed to tempt Him was the Holy Spirit. From this learn that God exposes just men to temptation because of the benefits which they derive therefrom. The first of these benefits is that they may be preserved in greater humility, seeing themselves liable to the greatest sins. The second, because in temptation they feel the need of living more closely united to God, and recognise that without the divine assistance they would be overcome and lost. The third, because by courageously resisting temptation they practise many acts of virtue, and acquire a rich treasure of merit.

APPLICATION. Consequently you must not give way to excessive fear in temptation. Remember it is the time to fight valiantly, in order that you may receive a more precious crown from our Lord. He will not refuse you the helps necessary to conquer, provided only that on your part you do not fail in your duty.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In my trouble I called upon the Lord, and the Lord heard me.* (Ps. cxviii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Christ prepared Himself

for the combat by prayer and a rigorous fast of forty days. Here are the weapons with which you also must fortify yourself that you may resist the assaults of the evil one. Fasting and mortification must weaken the rebellion of our stubborn nature, which leagues itself with the demon and works with him. Prayer also must unite you with God, otherwise you will not be able to resist an enemy who is so much more powerful than you.

APPLICATION. In imitation then of our Blessed Lord learn to use these two means well, both when in imminent danger of temptation and also in the time of temptation itself. You may then rest assured that you will not be overcome thereby, but that with the divine assistance you will conquer, for *God will not deny His grace to the man who does his best.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I sought the Lord and he heard me, and he delivered me from all my troubles.* (Ps. xxxiii, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the three kinds of temptation by which Christ was assailed by Lucifer. The first was that of gluttony. This is the first also for not a few, who under the plea and pretext of health expose themselves to this temptation. The second was of vainglory and pride, *if thou art the Son of God cast thyself down.* It was in this manner that Lucifer himself was cast down from heaven, and Adam from out of the earthly paradise. And how many does it not likewise send to ruin in our own days, for *pride is the beginning of all sin.* (Ecclus. x, 15.)

The third temptation was that of avarice and ambition, the devil falsely promising our Blessed Lord the dominion of all the kingdoms of the world: *all these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore*

me. There are many people, for whom such large promises as these are not necessary to induce them to bend their hearts and knees to Satan. With how much less does not the malignant spirit succeed in making them turn their backs on Christ to serve Lucifer?

APPLICATION. If you would be safe from these dangers imitate holy David. Take notice of how he behaves in the midst of the assaults of the evil one. *I was clothed with hair-cloth: I humbled my soul with fasting and my prayer shall be turned into my bosom.* (Ps. xxxiv, 13.) Above all omit not to discover your temptations faithfully to your spiritual director, this being an excellent means both to conquer temptation and to prevent it. Thus you will not stand alone, but will have a trusty guide.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 68.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

AGONY IN THE GARDEN

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground. (Luke xxii, 43–44.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how to our afflicted Redeemer, for having prayed to His Heavenly Father, there was sent an angel to comfort Him, whom we may believe to have been the Archangel Gabriel who is called the *Strength of God.* When you have recourse to God to be delivered from some trouble or anguish,

you are surprised if your prayer is not answered immediately. But, if the divine Father delays to grant the fervent supplications of His beloved Son, how can you repine if God tarries to answer your prayers that are so wanting in due reverence and fervour ?

APPLICATION. When God delays to grant you favours it is not because He does not wish to do so. It is then that you must remember to dispose yourselves by repeated acts of faith, of humility, and of other virtues in order to receive graces and favours more abundantly.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With expectation I waited for the Lord, and he was attentive unto me.* (Ps. xxxix, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus was not delivered by the Archangel from the inward sufferings caused by a natural dread of the death of the cross. He was however strengthened in mind, by there being placed before Him the fruit that would result from His death to the glory of His divine Father, to the advantage of mankind, and to the exaltation of His own Sacred Humanity. It is thus also that God hearkens to the prayers of those who are most dear to Him. He does not deliver them from the afflictions they suffer, but He gives them strength to bear them and to overcome the repugnance of nature.

APPLICATION. Whenever you are assailed by some trouble of body or mind, you do well indeed to seek help from God. But if instead of delivering you from your affliction, He gives you strength to bear it with resignation and even readiness, it will be all the better for you and will render you richer in merit and in virtue.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In my trouble I*

called upon the Lord, and the Lord heard me. (Ps. cxvii, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that as the sadness and fear increased in the soul of Jesus He experienced the agony of death; *being in agony*, as St. Luke tells us. All the blood, which by the excess of natural fear had rushed to the heart, was forced out from His sacred veins and ran down in great drops from all parts of His sacred body: *And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground.* Even to this intense degree did the soul of Jesus suffer in conforming itself to the will of His divine Father.

APPLICATION. What violence have you used up to now against the unruly suggestions of your nature? *For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* (Heb. xii, 4.) With this blood which Jesus shed through His love for you, He has given you a salutary fountain wherein to cleanse you from your sins, and impart to you a more lively knowledge of their malice. The Apostle Peter was aghast at seeing His divine Master kneeling on the ground at his feet to wash them with water. Can you then look unmoved on Jesus prostrate upon the ground, His soul in an agony of death, and shedding streams of blood from every member of His sacred body in order to wash away the stains of your sins? Strive to realise better the excess of His love for you and at the same time the enormity of your own misdeeds, for the cleansing of which so much of His sacred blood was needed.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What profit is there in my blood?* (Ps. xxix, 10.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

THE TREASON OF JUDAS

Judas one of the twelve . . . coming to Jesus, he kissed Him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? (Matt. xxvi, 50.) *Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?* (Luke xxii, 48.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the depth of iniquity into which Judas the Apostle fell. Not satisfied with conspiring against our Lord's life and selling the blood of his divine master for a few pence, he headed a troop of soldiers and betrayed Jesus with the kiss of peace, and the welcome of a friend. Into such an excess did one of our Lord's most intimate disciples fall, an apostle and one who had even worked miracles; and this because he had allowed himself to be overcome by the spirit of avarice, and had appropriated to himself part of those common funds which our Lord had confided to his care.

APPLICATION. Such falls are also to be found among those who let themselves be drawn away from the right path by some passion, and who do not fear to approach the sacraments with poison in their hearts and so give to Jesus Christ the kiss of the traitor. You too are not secure against a similar temptation. Consequently be watchful over your passions, stand in fear of yourself and confide with all your strength in the divine goodness.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.* (Ps. vi, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that although our Blessed Saviour knew the treachery of Judas, He went forward

with a peaceful countenance to meet him. He embraced him, He refused not the kiss of peace and called him by the familiar name of friend: *Friend, whereto art thou come?* If then Jesus received so lovingly the man who came to compass His death, may we not rest assured that he who comes to the feet of Jesus, mourning over his sins, will be lovingly embraced by Him and taken back again into His favour?

APPLICATION. From the meekness shown by our Lord towards Judas, do you also learn not to refuse acts of kindness to one who may have given you displeasure. It is sad sometimes to behold even among those who profess a more perfect life, the omission not only of those special marks of love which belong to the counsels, but even of those which are of precept; and this so far that, whereas the traitor Judas was treated by Christ as a friend, we sometimes see a friend and brother treated almost as a traitor. Examine therefore carefully how you behave towards any one who has caused you displeasure.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They that sought my hurt spoke vain things and thought upon deceits all the day long. But I as a deaf man heard not, and I was as a dumb man that doth not open his mouth.* (Ps. xxxvii, 13–14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that as the gentle words used by Jesus to the traitor sufficed not to soften his heart, our Blessed Lord disclosed to him the enormity of his sin: *Whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?* Fear you not, Judas, to betray your Master, your Redeemer and your God by a kiss of peace? And this our Blessed Saviour said to save if possible this perishing soul from the fatal precipice, it being true charity to use every available

means to save one's neighbour from impending evil. Nevertheless, neither these marks of love nor these warnings sufficed to touch the heart of Judas, hardened as it was by the spirit of avarice. Even when the soldiers fell trembling to the earth, he alone was not terrified, or softened, whom neither gentleness nor threats nor miracles could move.

APPLICATION. It was by degrees that Judas arrived at such blindness and hardness of heart. You also must learn to resist your passions from the beginning, if you would not come to fall finally into the same precipice.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If mine enemy had reviled me I would verily have borne it . . . but it was thou, a man of one mind with me.* (Ps. liv, 13–14.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

SEIZURE OF JESUS

As soon therefore as he had said to them: I am he; they went backward, and fell to the ground. (John xviii, 6.) *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.* (Luke xxii, 53.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus went forward to meet the armed Jews and said: *It is I.* At these simple words they all fell to the ground terrified. Our Blessed Redeemer wished thereby to let them know the sovereign power of His divine person, in order that they might realise the enormity of their sin in seizing Him.

APPLICATION. Could you also but realise whom it is you offend, each time you offer some insult to our Lord, you likewise would immediately fall trembling to the earth. Whenever you are tempted to offend

Him, beg of Him to enlighten you and to bring home to you that He is your God and Creator, your Redeemer and your sovereign Judge. Remember how far greater will be your terror at the hour of death and in the valley of Jehosaphat, at the final sentence resounding as thunder against the guilty.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hear me, O Lord my God, enlighten my eyes that I sleep not ever in death.* (Ps. xii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that when, our Lord so willing, they were able to rise from the ground, He then said to them: *This is your hour and the power of darkness;* as much as to say, till now you had not permission to injure Me because the hour of My passion had not yet arrived. But now I give full liberty to you and in your persons to the powers of darkness to do your worst. By this our Lord would give us to understand that all the sufferings He endured came to Him, not direct from the violence of His persecutors, but by the free will with which He delivered Himself into the hands of His enemies the Jews, in order to redeem us from the hands of our mortal enemies.

APPLICATION. If then Jesus for love of you gave Himself unreservedly into the hands of His enemies to be tortured and crucified, will you not now once for all for the love of Him cast yourself willingly into the hands of His loving providence, that so He may dispose of your whole being according to His good pleasure?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me . . . O save me in thy mercy.* (Ps. xxx, 16–17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how with this permission those insolent men began to strike our Blessed Lord and bind

Him fast with ropes and chains, casting Him to earth and treading Him under foot. They then dragged Him through the public streets of Jerusalem, heaping blows and insults on Him as He passed along.

APPLICATION. See herein how you also have acted towards the Son of God when you have sinned. You too seized the divine person of Jesus and trampled Him under your feet: *You have trodden under foot the Son of God*, says St. Paul. (Heb. x, 29.) To make satisfaction now for all the wrongs you have done our Saviour, let not the restrictions of the commandments of God or Holy Church seem to you too severe, nor the duties of your state of life too burdensome, seeing that for your sins Jesus has suffered so infinitely more.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* (Ps. l, 4.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

HOUSE OF ANNAS

And they led him away to Annas first: the high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine: one of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow. (John xviii, 13, 19, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus, the sovereign judge of the living and the dead, is first of all dragged as a criminal before Annas, who ostentatiously examined Him and questioned Him regarding His disciples and His doctrine. Under this humiliating interrogation Jesus stood there humble and meek, a rope about His neck, and His sacred hands bound in fetters. About His doctrine He would make reply. About His

disciples He answered not, because praise them He could not, blame them He would not.

APPLICATION. Such is the rule which our Lord would teach you by His example, never to speak of your neighbour when you cannot say good of him. How many times have you not transgressed this golden rule, how often criticised the defects of others, particularly when any one has offended you? Remember what St. James says, that no one should *think himself to be religious not bridling his tongue.* (James i, 26.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips.* (Ps. cxl, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how wise and prudent was the answer which our Blessed Lord gave the High Priest regarding His doctrine. He had always spoken and taught in public, and all those who heard Him could testify to His teaching: *Ask them who have heard me, what I have spoken unto them.* (John xviii, 21.) Consider on the contrary how unjust and cruel was the blow with which a mailed hand violently struck His face, with such force as to make that divine countenance on which *the angels desire to look* (1 Peter i, 12) all livid and covered with blood. Was it not a miracle of patience on the part of Jesus, not to have made all creation rise up against that insolent being to avenge the insult offered to their common Lord?

APPLICATION. Will you not then learn from this example of patience to bear meekly a hard word, an apparent slight, a passing affront, without giving way to resentment or taking revenge?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth.* (Ps. xxxvii, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Jesus Who had remained silent under accusation, insults and other sufferings when He was struck, spoke gently in His own defence: *If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou me?* He would make answer for two reasons. The first was that all might see He was not irreverent towards the high priest and to set an example to all of the respect due to authority, and particularly that of the Church. The second reason was His zeal to uphold and defend the truth of His divine doctrine. Jesus is silent then amidst personal insults and torments; He speaks only in defence of His doctrine. St. Augustine says: *Even as a sheep He was silent, as a shepherd He taught,* so that His silence might not prejudice the honour of God or the good of men.

APPLICATION. But you perhaps do quite the contrary. Personal indignities you deeply resent, but reck little or nothing of the offences committed against God, or the injuries done your neighbour.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have set a guard to my mouth when the sinner stood against me. I was dumb and was humbled.* (Ps. xxxviii, 2–3.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

ST. PETER'S FALL

And Peter followed him afar off, even into the court of the high priest; and he sat with the servants at the fire, and warmed himself. (Mark xiv, 54.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the causes of Peter's fall. The first was because he followed *afar off*. The love in his heart for his divine Master had become cool and his desire to die with Him had grown less. Hence

he gave way to fear at the cruel treatment he saw Jesus receive in the court of Caiaphas.

APPLICATION. In like manner is brought about the downfall of many souls who at one time have been fervent. They begin by becoming careless in their exercises of piety and their religious observances. They neglect prayer and self-denial. They make little of venial sin. By degrees their heart and soul become more and more estranged from God. The consequence is that they feel the duties of their state more irksome, and they become ashamed of the slight humiliations often attached to leading a good Christian life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My friends and my neighbour have drawn near and stood against me, and they that were near stood afar off.* (Ps. xxxvii, 12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another cause of St. Peter's fall, namely, that he presumed too much upon himself. He heeded not what his divine Master had foretold him but boldly entered the courtyard of the high priest. He there began to converse with those ribald servants and warmed himself at their fire. Such were the steps by which he cast himself into the precipice. The first was his neglect of the warning made to him by our Lord, and his own presumption; the second was his fearless entrance into the company of the courtyard; and the third was the idle conversation which he held with the same.

APPLICATION. Observe here the difference between those who are fervent and those who are lax. The fervent fear their own weakness and fly the occasions of sin. They do not idly waste time but remain duly recollected and well occupied. The lax on the contrary have confidence in themselves and they fear no

falls. They rush forward into the midst of danger, and spend hours and hours in idle amusement and in worldly conversation. Ask yourself to which of these classes you belong.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep thy words.* (Ps. cxviii, 101.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how lamentable was the fall of this Apostle. It was he, who in the garden had the courage to defend his Master against a body of armed soldiers, and to cut off the ear of Malchus with his sword. And here in the courtyard, at the word of a simple maidservant, who declared him to be a disciple of Jesus he lost all his courage and protested that he knew Him not: *I know not the man.* At the second interrogation he denies with an oath, and at the third with curses; *then he began to curse and to swear.* See here the terrible fall of the head of the Apostles and the chief pillar of the Church. Behold how those fervent protests he made at the last supper have all vanished like smoke.

APPLICATION. How much less confidence then ought you yourself to have in those protestations you have made to God in prayer, and in the resolutions you have formed. Learn then to fear and not to presume as the Apostle teaches you: *With fear and trembling work out your salvation.* (Phil. ii, 12.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it.* (Ps. cxxvi, 1.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

ST. PETER'S REPENTANCE

And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said unto him . . . and he began to weep. (Mark xiv, 72.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what a bitter suffering it was for Jesus to see Peter fall, and to hear Himself so shamefully denied under His very eyes. What a sorrow for Thee, O Lord Jesus, to be first of all betrayed by Judas, then abandoned by the disciples, and last of all denied by the head of the Apostles, and this after so many promises and protestations of fidelity on his part. This injury was to the heart of Jesus the most bitter of all, because it was inflicted by him who was His most favoured friend.

APPLICATION. From this you may see how much more displeasing to our Lord are the offences of those whom He has the more generously favoured. It is no strange thing if the votaries of the world deny Him, but if one who professes to be His follower and disciple deny Him and protest not to know Him, oh how grievously does He feel the affront! Reflect over all the blessings and graces He has given to you in particular, if you would understand the gravity of your sins and the wrong you have done Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Peter came to recognise his sin and to rise from his fall. *And immediately the cock crew, and Peter remembered the word of Jesus.* (Matt. xxvi, 74–75.) Thus was recalled to him his

Master's prediction and the promises he had made Him in the upper chamber. Again, we read, *And the Lord turning looked on Peter.* (Luke xxii, 61.) This look of Jesus gave him light to see the heinousness of his sin and the grace to detest it. Admire here the merciful goodness of Christ Who amidst all His sufferings is not unmindful of His faithless disciple, but comes speedily to his aid.

APPLICATION. But how many times has not our Lord shown a like mercy to you after your falls? Remorse of conscience was the first warning He gave you; then followed illumination of mind and compunction of heart due to the loving glance the Lord in pity cast upon you. Will you not then thank Him, seeing that at the time when you lived most in forgetfulness of Him He never forgot you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn not away thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble, O hear me speedily.* (Ps. lxviii, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the effects of Peter's repentance: *and going forth he wept bitterly.* Stricken to the heart with intense sorrow at the look of Jesus, he left the court to hide himself in secret and to weep bitterly for his sin. Nor ceased he as long as he lived so to weep as often as he heard the cock crow.

APPLICATION. These then are the signs of true repentance. We must detest our sins and weep for them with tears that spring from a contrite heart. We must withdraw from the occasions which caused our fall, nor ever forget our past sins, in order to grieve for them and to do suitable penance for them. Examine and see if these signs are found in you. If not, implore of Jesus in His mercy to give them to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *A sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O Lord, thou dost not despise.* (Ps. l, 19.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Read Matt. xvii, 1–9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that it is the property of the divine goodness to console, and to give even in this life a foretaste of heaven to those who follow our Lord faithfully. Therefore Jesus willed to comfort those three disciples St. Peter, St. James and St. John who were His most intimate companions, with a glimpse of paradise in His transfiguration upon Mount Thabor.

APPLICATION. You would wish to have consolation but not suffering; you would like to be Christ's companion in His glory but not in the bitterness of His passion. But this cannot be. Consider a little how much more happy and how more favoured of God, even in this life, and much more so in the next, are those good Christians who are careful to deny themselves, rather than those who are ever and in all things seeking their own satisfaction.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast multiplied thy greatness, and turning to me thou hast comforted me.* (Ps. lxx, 21.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this vision of the transfiguration was vouchsafed to the disciples upon a high and solitary mountain. *He bringeth them up into a high mountain apart.* By this we learn that the consolations and delights of the spirit are not to be tasted in the midst of the distractions and dissipation of worldly conversation. He only, whose heart is weaned from

the things of this world, can rise in spirit to converse with God and to live alone with Him.

APPLICATION. You seek your consolation in those creatures which occupy your heart and your mind. You converse little with God in prayer, and you live besieged as it were by a thousand desires and earthly affections. What wonder then is it that you should be deprived of those spiritual consolations, which our Lord reserves for those who go *up into a high mountain apart*? If you would climb the mountain of perfection, withdraw into solitude, there to converse with God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul refused to be comforted, I remembered God and was delighted.* (Ps. lxxvi, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the three disciples enjoyed this great privilege only for a short time, because the consolations which God vouchsafes His servants are meant to stimulate them to work and to labour and not to remain idle in the delights of the spirit. The present life is the time for gaining merit and for suffering, not for rest and enjoyment. Consequently even on Thabor, in the midst of that vision of heaven when Moses and Elias appeared visibly, they spoke only of the suffering and ignominy of Calvary, *they spoke of His decease.* (Luke ix, 31.) St. Peter was reproved because he desired to make permanent their stay amidst these joys.

APPLICATION. When God favours you with some spiritual consolation, let it indeed serve you as an encouragement to labour and to work all the more for Him, but expect not that it will be more than passing. When it has gone let the company of Jesus crucified upon Calvary suffice you. There you can say

with more reason even than Peter did : *Lord, it is good for us to be here.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As for me I am poor and needy, but the Lord is careful for me.* (Ps. xxxix, 18.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

THE HOUSE OF CAIAPHAS

The high priest asked him and said to him : Art thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed God? (Mark xiv, 61.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus was, with violent and cruel treatment, led from the house of Annas to the supreme tribunal of Caiaphas to be judged and condemned to death. There were brought likewise many false witnesses to accuse our Blessed Lord of various misdeeds. Jesus however answered not their shameless accusations, and by this His silence chose to prove His innocence better than by a defence.

APPLICATION. O divine silence ! What a reproach to our pride which urges us wholly to excuse ourselves, not only when we are innocent but even when we are guilty. This is to act precisely contrary to the example given us by Jesus Christ, Who when calumniated beyond all measure was silent. *But Jesus held his peace.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it.* (Ps. xxxviii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that when the High Priest saw the inconsistency of the false witnesses, and the innocence of Christ proved by His very silence, he wickedly devised another way of condemning Him. Rising therefore from his seat Caiaphas conjured our Blessed Lord : *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God.* Jesus, Who

hitherto had been silent, not defending Himself against calumny, now became eloquent in the defence of God's honour and of those truths that touched the salvation of the world. He confesses openly that He is the Messias and the true Son of God, saying, *I am He*, well knowing the occasion they would take from this to condemn Him to death. Hereby He would first of all give an example to His followers how they must generously profess the truths of the faith and the divine honour before the face of their enemies, even at the cost of their lives, and likewise take away all excuse from the Jews for not acknowledging the Messias. He then added: *I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* By these words He gave them to understand that, if in this His first coming to redeem them He appeared in the form of a malefactor, in His second coming He would appear in all the majesty of a judge.

APPLICATION. When you feel yourself carried away by your passions to commit some offence against God, remember that Jesus Christ will soon be your Judge, and that without appeal, first at the hour of death and afterwards in the valley of Jehosaphat. This thought will make it easier for you to conquer your evil inclinations and to show due reverence to God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God shall come manifestly; our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. . . . He shall call the heaven from above and the earth to judge his people.* (Ps. xlix, 3-4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this public declaration of Christ, by which He openly declared Himself to be the Son of God, Who had come into the world in such lowliness in order to redeem it, and Who would one

day return in glory to judge it, was in perfect agreement with the great works and miracles which had been wrought by Him. But He was at once proclaimed by the whole of that court worthy of death as a perjurer and a sacrilegious usurper of the divinity. Those proud Jews would not recognise in one so poor and so humble their Messias, whom they expected to come as a glorious king. And so it came to pass that, whereas the Son of God had come on earth to work out our salvation by means of such humiliations and of such sufferings, instead of winning greater love and service He was wickedly hated and condemned.

APPLICATION. How often is the same intense ingratitude renewed in the world by those who refuse to acknowledge Christ as their king and redeemer, because they see Him humbled and crucified on Calvary! In order that you may not be of the number of those ungrateful people, confess and adore Jesus Crucified as your God and your Redeemer and say from your heart: *The lowlier Thou hast made Thyself for me, the dearer art Thou become to me.* (St. Bernard.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art my God, my Saviour.* (Ps. xxiv, 5.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

THE NIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF CAIAPHAS

Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him: and others struck his face with the palms of their hands. (Matt. xxvi, 67.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how after Jesus had been declared worthy of death at the tribunal of the High Priest, the vile rabble of servants took occasion to

offer Him all manner of outrageous insults, making mock of Him all that night, utterly exhausted of all strength as He was and weakened by His bitter agony and sweat of blood. Here pause to admire the exceeding patience of Jesus, Who has become the butt of a wicked rabble that had neither authority nor orders from the judges thus to ill-treat Him. Where is the tribunal to be found wherein licence is given to menials to outrage even a culprit at their caprice?

APPLICATION. You can hardly as it is support with patience the mortification which submission to lawful authority must necessarily subject you to. Far less will you bear with patience those annoyances and mortifications, whether by word or by deed, which come from those who have neither authority nor reason to inflict them. In such a case you at once grow angry and seek to be revenged. And yet this is just the most precious and favourable time for you. When you bear with the just reprimands or mortifications of those who are over you, then you do but your duty; but when you bear those which you have not deserved, then you gain very much, you become rich in merit and in eternal reward.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For thy sake have I borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.* (Ps. lxviii, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the nature of the insults offered that night to our Blessed Lord. They spat in His face. They defiled with spittle the face of Him *on whom the angels desire to look.* (1 Peter i, 12.) They blindfolded Him and dealt Him blows and buffets, bidding Him in derision to prophesy who had struck Him.

APPLICATION. To such a degree did the Son of God descend and abase Himself for you. And are you not able for the love of Jesus to bear a slight jest,

an offensive word, for His sake Who for you suffered these outrages and still worse ? For the evangelists have left written : *and blaspheming, many other things they said against him* (Luke xxii, 65), things too shameful to describe, as was revealed to St. Brigid, and which only the day of judgment will make known.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.* (Ps. lxviii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that these outrages offered to Jesus are at one and the same time a representation of, and the work of your sins, for the expiation of which He submitted Himself to such treatment. It is you who buffeted Him and struck Him ; it is you who spat upon Him and blindfolded Him ; it is you who insulted and injured Him with your tongue, your hands, your eyes and your misdeeds.

APPLICATION. Turn then the indignation which rises in your heart, at the thought of those audacious men who so outraged the Son of God, against yourself and your own sins. These are far more offensive and painful to our Lord than were the insults offered to Him on that night by His enemies the Jews.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The wicked have wrought upon my back ; they have prolonged their iniquity.* (Ps. cxxviii, 3.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

HOUSE OF PILATE

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's hall. (John xviii, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Jews, impatient to see Jesus condemned to the death of the cross, led Him to the tribunal of Pilate amid a great tumult

and a large concourse of the priests and people. They themselves however would not enter the hall for fear of incurring legal impurity, and of being thus excluded from celebrating the Pasch. Behold how they pretend fear of contracting the slightest stain whilst at the same time, filled with jealousy and envy as they are, they scruple not to procure the death of the Son of God :—*they strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.* (Matt. xxiii, 24.)

APPLICATION. Those who place all their religion in exterior observance only, but interiorly have their hearts full of worldly affections and sullied with feelings of hatred and revenge, resemble these Jews. Examine then awhile your interior dispositions and see if they correspond with your outward profession, because it is according to the former that God sees and judges.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Shall not God search out these things ; for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.* (Ps. xliii, 22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how when Pilate asked the Jews, *What accusation bring you against this man?* they with their pharisaic pride made answer : *If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him to you.* They imagined in their blindness that their mere word should be sufficient reason for His condemnation. Such then was the return that Jesus received for all His benefits and for all the miraculous cures worked in favour of this people, to be rejected by them and then to be accused of being a malefactor.

APPLICATION. Learn then from our Lord to suffer with patience if your actions be sometimes unkindly interpreted, and if moreover you are unjustly punished for them. Bear in mind the grievous accusa-

tions they brought against our Blessed Lord. They accused Him of being a seducer of the people, He Who had exhorted all to the observance of the divine commands; of refusing tribute to Cæsar, He Who had publicly bidden men to *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's: and to God the things that are God's* (Matt. xxii, 21), and Who in fact paid the tax through the hands of St. Peter; and of making Himself King, He Who hid Himself so that the people might not crown Him King. What little account then ought you to make of the sinister judgments of men!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.* (Ps. cxviii, 137.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Pilate perceiving in these accusations the malice of the Jews, gave orders that the case should be carried before their own tribunal: —*Judge Him according to your law.* (John xviii, 31.) The Jews replied:—*It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.* They possessed, indeed, the power to stone but not to crucify, and they wished that Jesus should be condemned to the death of the cross by the Roman judge, so that He might die a more painful and ignominious death, and also in order to hide their own injustice.

APPLICATION. In like manner do those persons act who, full of rancour against their neighbour, contrive by accusations and detractions to cast discredit on him, so that he may be mortified and crushed and their own malignity may meanwhile pass unnoticed. But *God is not mocked.* (Gal. vi, 7.) He sees to the very bottom of all hearts, and knows how in His own good time to reveal and punish this subtle malice.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord shall laugh*

at the sinner, for he foreseeth that his day shall come. (Ps. xxxvi, 13.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

DESPAIR OF JUDAS

***I** have sinned in betraying innocent blood.*
(Matt. xxvii, 4.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Judas when through avarice he had betrayed his divine Master into the hands of the Jews, hoped that then He might perhaps free Himself from them as He had done before, when the people would have stoned Him or precipitated Him from the brow of the hill. When however he saw that his Master was condemned to death by the council, he recognised the enormity of his treachery and fell into utter despair.

APPLICATION. Such is the ordinary device of the devil. He blinds our eyes when in the heat of passion so that we may not fully realise the enormity of the sin, but when it is once committed he reopens them only that his victim may despair. This he attempts particularly at the hour of death, when he parades before the eyes of the dying man the multitude and the heinousness of his sins and so makes him despair. Whenever therefore you are tempted by some passion to fall into sin, reflect on the remorse and regret that is sure to follow once the heat of passion is over, but think still more of what will happen at the hour of death. In this way you will be more careful and watchful against the deceits of the devil.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear.* (Ps. xxvi, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Judas recognised his sin, repented indeed of his treason and publicly acknowledged it before the priests: *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood*, and therewith restored the sacrilegious money. But why had he not recourse to the feet of Jesus, Who would certainly have welcomed him as a prodigal son? Instead of this he betook himself to the priests, who proudly scorned and insulted him for his crime. *What is that to us? look thou to it.* Then despairing of obtaining pardon, he said even as Cain, *My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon.* (Gen. iv, 13.) By this despair in the divine goodness he sinned more grievously still, for, as St. Gregory says, by betraying his Master he sinned against the Son of Man, but by yielding to despair he sinned against the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION. If ever you should fall into grave sin fail not to run to the feet of Jesus, and say to Him with a truly contrite heart: O my Jesus, I have indeed done You great wrong, but I will never do what would be worse. I will never mistrust your infinite goodness and despair of your mercy.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.* (Ps. xxx, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the most miserable end of Judas. Horrified at his crime he deemed himself unworthy to live any longer, as he had become hateful to God, to men and to himself. *He departed and went and hanged himself with a halter.* (Matt. xxvii, 5.) Behold here an apostle, one who had worked miracles! But because from the very beginning he had not checked that passion of avarice which made him steal from the common alms, to what an extremity was he not brought! He came to lose the apostolate

which he himself had renounced, the paltry sum of money for which he had betrayed his Master, the life of his body which he himself cut short, along with that of his soul, and finally God for all eternity.

APPLICATION. Will not this example suffice to make you vigilant in repressing the small beginnings of irregular passions, for you cannot tell where they will end in leading you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have sworn and I am steadfastly purposed to keep the judgments of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 106.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

BEFORE PILATE

I find no cause in this man. (Luke xxiii, 14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when Pilate heard among the accusations brought against Jesus by the Jews, that He made Himself King of the Jews, he examined Him only on this point as on one proper to his tribunal: *Art thou the King of the Jews?* Jesus openly confessed that He was a king, but of a kingdom other than that over which earthly sovereigns reign: *My kingdom is not of this world.* (John xviii, 36.) The rule of men in this world consists in lording it over their subjects, in commanding them, in exacting tribute and homage from them; but that of Jesus Christ, the King of glory, lies wholly in attracting to Himself the hearts of men by love, in receiving the tribute of their affections and in making them sharers of His Kingdom. Oh what a great king, what a truly worthy monarch is Jesus Christ!

APPLICATION. Merely as a Christian you are a vassal of Jesus Christ. Vow therefore fidelity to Him

and say, *Thou art my King and my Lord.* (Ps. v, 2.) If in the past you have been remiss in your duty, begin now to obey and to serve no other but Him. Should you be tempted to serve any other than Christ, say: Jesus alone is the true King Whom I serve, nor care I for any other possessions but those He promises me in His own great kingdom.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art thyself my king and my God.* (Ps. xliii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how when Pilate repeated the question: *Art thou a king then?* Jesus replied: I am a King as thou sayest, but *My kingdom is not of this world*, whereunto indeed I came in order to teach men the way of release from the slavery of sin and of meriting the kingdom of heaven. To this Pilate made no reply, but turning, went away.

APPLICATION. How many also are there to-day, who turn their back on the teaching of Christ that they may give ear to the pernicious maxims of the world. To which class do you belong? To those who hearken to the doctrine of Christ, and conform their actions to His precepts, or to those who conform themselves to the teaching and maxims of the world?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have hated the unjust and thy law have I loved.* (Ps. cxviii, 113.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that though Pilate declared Jesus altogether innocent, *I find no cause in this man in those things wherein you accuse Him*, (Luke xxiii, 14) the Jews ceased not from crying out and protesting louder than ever against His innocence. But still Jesus is silent and will not defend Himself. He knows that before the tribunal of heaven He stands as one guilty, for He has taken our sins upon Himself and made Himself surety to the divine justice for our debts.

APPLICATION. Behold then your innocent Jesus most unjustly accused before the tribunal of Pilate, but justly indeed condemned before the tribunal of God. For Divine Justice could not be appeased for our sins except by the death of a man, who was entirely innocent and who at the same time was God. Realise then once for all the gravity of your sins which constrained the divine Father to condemn to death His own most innocent Son?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Exalt ye the Lord our God, and adore at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy.* (Ps. xcviii, 9.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

HOUSE OF HEROD

And Herod with his army set him at nought and mocked him. (Luke xxiii, 11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Pilate, seeing the innocence of Jesus and the jealousy of the Jews, took the step of referring the case to the tribunal of Herod so as not to be compelled to condemn a guiltless man, or by acquitting Him to draw down upon himself the hatred of all that people. But in this Pilate did grievous wrong, for it suffices not that a judge should not condemn one who is innocent. He is bound in addition to defend him.

APPLICATION. He who is wedded to his own interests rather than solicitous for those of God and of justice acts in the same manner. He attempts to satisfy partly God and partly man, to conciliate the maxims of the Gospel and of the world. But he will never succeed. It is not enough to abstain from doing evil, but we must also not omit to do good, to

which each one is obliged according to his duty and state in life. How many there are who are condemned for sins of omission, because they failed to do good or to prevent the evil which according to their office and degree it was their duty to have done. Reflect then seriously upon the obligations of your state of life, and understand that sins of omission are rocks beneath the surface, which are a frequent cause of shipwreck because they are less noticeable.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Trust in the Lord and do good.* (Ps. xxxvi, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Herod who had long been desirous to see Jesus, received Him with courtesy, making Him large promises if only He would work some miracle in his presence. But our Lord would not work miracles to gratify the curiosity and pleasure of this impious king, nor would He deign even a reply to his request. Moreover He would not defend Himself from the accusations of His enemies who were seeking His death.

APPLICATION. Learn from this that if Jesus Christ would not work miracles nor give any answer to him who so besought Him, not indeed that he might thereby gain profit or amend his life, but merely to satisfy his curiosity, still less will He cause you to hear His interior voice or communicate His gifts to you, if you make your prayer or your other spiritual duties, not for devotion and your profit but principally for your own satisfaction. Observe moreover that although our Lord would not work any miracle to satisfy the curiosity of Herod, yet he wrought a still greater miracle, and that was the miracle of meekness and invincible patience, of silence under all the accusations of the Jews and the mockeries of the whole

court of Herod who spurned Him as a fool. Do you also for the love of Jesus try to bear patiently and in silence whatever unjust accusations or slights it may be given you to bear.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth.* (Ps. xxxviii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Jesus having been derided by Herod and his court as a fool, was sent back to Pilate clothed in a white garment in mockery and scorn. Behold the innocence and the wisdom of the Lord set at nought and counted as foolishness. So always is the innocence and simplicity of the just an object of ridicule to the world: *the simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn.* (Job xii, 4.) In heaven the wisdom of the world is reckoned *foolishness with God* (1 Cor. iii, 19) even as the world esteems the wisdom of heaven foolishness.

APPLICATION. If then you would wear the white robe of innocence abhor the foolish wisdom of the world. Prefer rather to be reputed foolish by the wise ones of this world, that so you may conform yourself to the example of Jesus Christ, eternal Wisdom itself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I had rather be despised in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of sinners.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
CASTING OUT THE DUMB DEVIL

(Read Luke xi, 14–28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how many there are like to this poor man, who was possessed by a dumb devil, who also are a prey to the evil spirit. In the first place are all those who are either wilfully silent in confession

regarding sins which they were not however ashamed to commit, or who will not tell all their specifying circumstances. Such again are all those who are silent about their temptations, which would cease if they spoke of them to their confessor or spiritual adviser. Thirdly, all those who neglect to admonish and correct their subjects, or those who come under their care. Fourthly, all those who neglect to make known to right authority disorders or scandals, in order to their remedy. Finally, all those who do not have recourse to the Lord to beg His help in all their needs.

APPLICATION. Look and see if any of these spirits of dumbness be found in you. If there be some, pray to our Lord earnestly and with all your heart that He would deliver you from them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge, there shall no evil approach unto thee.* (Ps. xc, 9–10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the crowd seeing that the demon was driven out of the possessed man by our Lord, at once began to praise and exalt Him. *And the multitudes were in admiration at it.* (Luke xi, 14.) On the other hand some of the envious Pharisees began to carp at and condemn Him, saying that He cast out devils by the power and help of the prince of demons: *He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* (Luke xi, 15.) Thus one and the same miracle is praised by the good and criticised by the wicked, who through envy and hatred are not able to get anything but evil out of good things.

APPLICATION. O how often is this repeated! The good praise and find motives to imitate the virtuous actions of the more fervent: whilst the

envious and less strict blame and criticise them. Be on your guard then against condemning the defects of others, or, worse, belittling their virtues. Strive rather to imitate the latter.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I cried with my whole heart, hear me, O Lord; I will seek thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 145.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Jesus Christ, seeing Himself so shamefully accused by the Pharisees of casting out devils by Beelzebub, became not indignant nor showed resentment. By His invincible meekness He gave proof that He worked miracles by divine power alone, and that the hour had come wherein through Him in person they might gain for themselves the kingdom of heaven. *Doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you.* (Luke xi, 20.) For unto this had He come on earth in visible form, in order to deliver them from the tyranny of the devil and to make them heirs of heaven.

APPLICATION. Each time you receive Holy Communion suppose that to you also it is said: *The kingdom of God is come upon you.* Learn to prize at their real worth and to your profit those precious moments, when Christ in His real presence is actually within you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

JESUS AND BARABBAS

Not this man but Barabbas. (John xviii, 40.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Pilate finding his plan of transferring the trial of Christ to Herod had failed, tried to free Him on the occasion of the Feast of

the Pasch, when at the request of the people he was wont to release one prisoner each year. He proposed therefore to the people a choice between two, the one Barabbas, who was a murderer, thief, and leader of sedition, the other, Jesus. And he asked: *Whom will you that I release to you?* Consider here the gross injustice of Pilate towards Jesus. After having declared Him innocent he puts Him on an equality with the most wicked of malefactors. But how far more grievous was the injustice of the Pharisees, who stirred up the people to ask for the pardon of Barabbas rather than that of Jesus! Reflect how bitter to the heart of our Lord was such an affront.

APPLICATION. It may easily happen that at times you will be passed by unnoticed, and will see another whom you consider inferior to yourself promoted to some post of honour or work. Recall to mind on such occasions that Jesus for love of you was forsaken by every one, and out of spite was set beneath Barabbas, and this will teach you how to bear slights for the love of Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Jews, not content with demanding of Pilate the liberation of Barabbas, clamoured for the condemnation of Jesus to the death of the cross. Such are the judgments of men when they are mastered by their ungoverned passions. They would grant life to a malefactor who is deserving of death, and deliver to the death of the cross an innocent man who had deserved nothing but good at the hands of all.

APPLICATION. How many there are who having set before them on the one hand the little imaginary good

there is in some vile creature, and on the other the infinite treasure of God's grace, choose rather, at the instigation of their own passions and of the devil, to lose the grace of God than a mere shadow of good which will vanish in a moment. Thus it comes to pass that anew they sentence Jesus to the death of the cross : *Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God.* (Heb. vi, 6.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have had delight in the way of thy testimonies, even as in all riches.* (Ps. cxviii, 14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the wonder of Pilate at the people's demand. He understood not the divine mystery, namely, that the divine Father willed that His innocent Son should be condemned by the voice of the people and that a guilty man should be set free, in order that on the one hand divine justice should be satisfied for the sins of men through the death of Jesus, and on the other hand that the divine mercy should be satisfied by the deliverance of man from eternal death.

APPLICATION. As then you behold the divine Father condemn to death His own innocent Son in order that you should be freed from eternal death, will you not say with David : *The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever ?* (Ps. lxxxviii, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.* (Ps. cxxix, 7.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

THE SCOURGING

The Son of man shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and scourged. (Luke xviii, 32.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the injustice of Pilate, who declares Christ to be innocent and in the same breath condemns Him to be scourged. This he did in order to satisfy the fury of that multitude, now become more insolent than ever because of the excessive timidity of the judge in protecting and acquitting an innocent man. Pilate was likewise led to sentence Christ to be scourged in order thereby to avoid putting Him to death as the Jewish rabble desired, and yet he finally sentenced Him to be crucified to satisfy that same vile multitude.

APPLICATION. Be then on your guard against yielding to fear or to the desires of your unruly passions, which even against your will can drag you along into sin. At the very beginning resist them with generosity and with resolution. Too many like Pilate let themselves be drawn along by their passions. They scourge Christ by their venial sins, and then proceed to crucify Him with their mortal ones.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am ready for scourges, and my sorrow is continually before me.* (Ps. xxxvii, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the excessive shame which Jesus endured in this flagellation, whilst He was divested of His garments and bound to the pillar before the gaze of so great a multitude. Thus was He made an object of scorn and derision to that insolent mob. Jesus was more cruelly wounded and covered with

confusion by being thus exposed to the gaze and wanton jests of this vile rabble than by the scourges, as He signified, saying to His Father: *Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion, and my shame.* (Ps. lxviii, 20.)

APPLICATION. And thus it was that Jesus wished to atone for the shame and confusion due to you because of your sins, and at the same time to win for you by His grace the precious nuptial garment of divine grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For thy sake have I borne reproach: shame hath covered my face.* (Ps. lxviii, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the excessive torture inflicted upon Jesus by this scourging, firstly on account of the exceeding delicacy of our Blessed Lord's Body. Moreover, the fierceness of the executioners was stimulated by the evil spirit and also by the Jews who wished to procure His death under these blows, the number of which amounted to many thousands. Finally, the instruments were of various kinds, formed either of very hard sinews, of knotty rods, or of ropes furnished with iron points. By these the divine body of our Lord was made quite livid in all its members, wounded and flayed even to the very bones, causing the precious blood to flow in streams from every part.

APPLICATION. At a spectacle so frightful are you not moved to pity? Do you not feel touched with compassion? See how dearly those gratifications of your senses against the law of God have cost your Jesus! Have you then the heart to add wound to wound by your renewed sins? Can you whilst gazing on all those wounds and so much blood which Jesus has shed all on account of your sins, still gratify your

rebellious desires and give pleasure to your traitorous senses by renewing the sufferings and wounds of our Lord ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The wicked have wrought upon my back : they have lengthened their iniquity.* (Ps. cxxviii, 3.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

CROWNING WITH THORNS

Platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. (Matt. xxvii, 29.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the diabolical cruelty of these inhuman executioners. The sight of Jesus standing there all bathed in His own blood, and with every part of His body torn open with wounds, should have sufficed to awaken pity in the most cruel hearts. Nevertheless these ministers of Satan only invented new ways of adding to His sufferings. After having cruelly covered His sacred body with the wounds of the scourges, they pierced His sacred head with a crown of thorns, covered Him with a ragged purple robe, placed a reed in His hand for a sceptre, and then for their pastime they adored Him as king of the Jews whilst they struck and spat upon His face. To what do we see you reduced O King of heaven and glory of the angels !

APPLICATION. These insults are a true image of what is done to Christ by those who adore Him with words and offend Him by their deeds, treating Him as a mock king. The empty reed symbolises those works that are offered to God, outwardly good but without any interior spiritual value. The crown of thorns is those wicked thoughts of presumption, pride and

sensuality ; the purple rags are those good works carelessly performed. Such is the treatment so often given to Jesus !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast set a crown of precious stones on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever.* (Ps. xx, 4–5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the torture produced by that crown woven with most sharp thorns and shaped like a helmet. They forcibly pressed it upon the head of our Blessed Lord with blows of sticks or with mailed hands, so that the thorns pierced His temples and passed through His eyes and ears, covering with blood that divine face which is the delight of paradise. A thorn entering the foot of an unwary beast of prey is sufficient to overcome it with pain, and make its roars resound throughout the forest. And Thou, O my Jesus, what torture, what spasms of pain didst Thou not suffer from seventy thorns buried and imbedded in the tender flesh of Thy sacred head, wherein are united so many nerves and centres of feeling.

APPLICATION. See here the fruit which the soil of your heart has yielded, that soil which the Son of God cultivated with such care and so much fatigue, by so many inspirations and so many benefits bestowed, thorns of excruciating pain and of intense ignominy.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me ; I am turned in my anguish while the thorn is fastened.* (Ps. xxxi, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, the mystery which our Blessed Saviour would teach you by this His painful and ignominious crowning. It is that all that the world regards as most honourable, such as sceptres, purple robes or crowns, are in His sight worthless and a mere

mockery; whereas all that the world counts a mockery and a disgrace is in His eyes honourable and glorious: *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour.* (Heb. ii, 7.) Christ while on earth would have no crown but one of thorns, and those the most piercing. How then can you hope to be a worthy member of such a head, if you leave to Christ the thorns of suffering and seek for yourself only comfort and ease? St. Catherine of Siena refused the crown of gold and embraced the crown of thorns which Jesus offered her, so that she might be conformed to Him her spouse.

APPLICATION. And you who as a Christian should become in all things like unto Christ, would you ask for any other crown than that which your leader wore? If you now refuse the gentler thorns that are now offered you, you may find yourself pierced with more painful ones at the hour of your death.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I looked for one that would grieve with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found him not.* (Ps. lxviii, 21.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

ECCE HOMO

And Pilate saith to them: Behold the man.
(John xix, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Pilate desirous of delivering Jesus from death, when now he beheld Him so shamefully treated and disfigured with wounds, thought that by showing Him to the people in so piteous a state, their stony hearts might be softened and satisfied with the Divine Blood already shed. Consequently, Pilate brought forth Jesus before the people crowned

as He was with thorns, clothed in purple and streaming with blood, and said to them: *Behold the Man!*

APPLICATION. Do you also contemplate Him and say to yourself: "*Behold the Man.* Behold that God-Man Who came to atone for my sins with His sufferings, and see to what a state He is reduced by my iniquities!" And if the sight of all those wounds does not suffice to restrain your sensuality, all those thorns to humble your pride, all that confusion and shame to repress your ambition and vanity, will you also bring yourself to cry out with those inhuman Jews: *Crucify Him, crucify Him?*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, O God, our protector; and look upon the face of thy Christ.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that you ought to consider these words, *Behold the Man*, as spoken to you by the Divine Father Himself. Behold that Man, Who is also God, born of Me, *from eternity*, Who having assumed human flesh made Himself your surety, your teacher, and a model of every virtue for your imitation. Therefore in your surety try to understand the gravity of your iniquities in the excess of His sufferings. Thank Him for such great mercy shown in your regard, without which you would have been eternally lost. As your teacher, give ear to the lessons He would give you, instructing you that the pleasures of the flesh are thorns, that gratify the senses and wound the soul; that the power of the great is no more than an empty and fragile reed. They make fair promises of support and of happiness which they soon break, and all their purple and riches are but mere rags which are soon consumed and perish. Finally our Blessed Redeemer teaches you as a perfect model by giving you an

example of all virtue in His sacred person: *Look and make it according to the pattern.* (Exod. xxv, 40.)

APPLICATION. From the example of our Blessed Lord learn to practise the virtue of meekness when you receive insults or affronts from others, to practise humility in your trials and afflictions which you have merited by your sins: *Look and make it according to the pattern.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart hath said to thee: my face hath sought thee: thy face, O Lord, will I seek.* (Ps. xxvi, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how these malicious Jews seeing Pilate so firm in not wishing to condemn so innocent a man to death, discovered a means of making him cast himself headlong into the precipice of so enormous an injustice by the cry of: *If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend;* you will lose Cæsar's favour, you will become his enemy. Oh what a powerful invention was this to terrify and crush the heart of the judge and make him guilty of the frightful crime of deicide!

APPLICATION. Even now also what innumerable fears and human respects draw many persons away from good, and plunge them into evil even against their will! Many there are who at heart would sincerely wish to live a good and regular life, to avoid taking part in useless and frivolous conversation, to attend more frequently to exercises of devotion; but they are deterred by the fear of human respect, and, on seeing themselves noticed and laughed at, they lose all heart and at once give up. View then matters in their proper light, and learn to make more account of the honour of God than of what people say.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *This is the work of*

them who oppose me before the Lord: and who speak evils against my soul. (Ps. cviii, 20.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

JESUS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Pilate washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man. (Matt. xxvii, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Pilate, desirous as he was to end the case and to pass sentence, still hesitated in his troubled heart. On the one hand he saw the manifest innocence of Jesus, and on the other the agitation of that tumultuous multitude who would accuse him to Cæsar. In the meantime his wife sent him a message, warning him on no account to render himself guilty of the death of that innocent and just Man: *Have thou nothing to do with that just man.* By this Divine Providence would make it appear that, as the first woman at the instigation of the bad angel was the cause of Adam's fall, so now Pilate should be withheld from giving an unjust sentence by a woman moved thereto by her good angel. But because Pilate heeded not this special light and help, he rendered himself much more guilty in the sight of God.

APPLICATION. How often too may this be the case with you! You are tempted either by your passions or by the devil or by human respect to fall into some fault! Meantime our Lord in His mercy has sent you light and remorse of conscience, warning you to resist and withdraw yourself from the commission of that fault. If in spite of all you yield to your unruly passions and despise the help of heaven, you will be still more gravely guilty because you thus commit sin

with full advertence and as it were with your eyes open.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enlighten mine eyes that I sleep not ever in death; lest mine enemy say at any time: I have prevailed against him.* (Ps. xii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, how Pilate being in such conflict between his own conscience and his fear of the people, tried to satisfy at one and the same time both his conscience and the perverse desires of the Jews, by protesting that he had no part in the condemnation of Christ and by washing his hands before all the people: *I am innocent of the blood of this just man.* But what did it avail him to wash his hands, when he foully stained his conscience by condemning the innocent to death?

APPLICATION. Those resemble Pilate who when they sin try to appear innocent themselves by casting the blame upon others; or those who against their own conscience consent to the unjust demands of others; or lastly those who under outward appearances seek to hide their interior faults. But how grievously do these deceive themselves, and how to their shame will they be covered with confusion when they stand before the judgment seat of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* (Ps. cxlii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the iniquitous and unjust sentence of Pilate, who not only condemned the innocent Jesus to the death of the cross, but gave Him also into the power of His enraged enemies to do their worst with Him: *he delivered him up to their will.* (Luke xxiii, 25.) Behold to what extremes Pilate is led through not resisting the unjust and furious clamours

of that people, and through fear of losing Cæsar's favour; and this because he looked more to his own private interest than to the sacred cause of justice. See, too, how all his designs were brought to naught, for this same Pilate was accused by these very Jews to Cæsar, lost his favour and himself came to die a miserable death.

APPLICATION. Let us also learn from this example to resist at the beginning, and earnestly to fight against our unruly passions. Pilate began to yield when first he left the case of our Lord to the people themselves, then passed Him on to Herod, next when he subjected the innocent Saviour to be scourged, and finally gave way when he passed on to the dreadful crime of condemning Jesus to be crucified.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my innocence: I have put my trust in the Lord.* (Ps. xxv, 1.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

JESUS LADEN WITH THE CROSS

They put on him his own garments and led him away to crucify him. (Matt. xxvii, 31.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the various sentiments which the sentence of Pilate aroused, proclaimed as it was with sound of trumpets. The Pharisees and all the people, now that they had obtained what had long been refused them, rejoiced and triumphed in a manner proper only to sinners, *who*, as we are told in Holy Writ, *rejoice in most wicked things* (Prov. ii, 14), without paying any heed to the fatal evils which hang over them. On the contrary our Blessed Lord on hearing the sentence raises His heart and mind to

heaven. He accepts that sentence, not as brought about by the perversity of the Jews nor as unjustly pronounced upon Him by Pilate, but as decreed for Him from all eternity by His divine Father for the salvation of the human race. And therefore He receives it with humble resignation, thereby conforming Himself most perfectly to the will of His divine Father.

APPLICATION. In the various vicissitudes of life there may not be wanting those, who will procure or cause you many kinds of crosses and troubles either unjustly or out of contempt or revenge. Learn however not to consider the person of the one who is the immediate cause to you of that insult or injury, but regard rather the divine good pleasure which permits this for your greater good. In this way you will accept the affliction with more resignation and bear it with greater patience.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us; for the years in which we have seen evils.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the executioners publicly and in fury hastened to tear off the purple garment from our Blessed Lord and cover Him again with His own, so that He should be recognised and despised by all the people of Jerusalem. This shame was chosen by our Lord to atone for that false shame and confusion which you feel when you are ashamed to wear the livery of Christ openly, or to show yourself an exact observer of all that your state of life requires of you.

APPLICATION. As a mere Christian you profess yourself to be a follower of Christ. Why then are you ashamed before others and even among those of your

own household to do publicly that which your state as such demands ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord, and thy law is my meditation.* (Ps. cxviii, 174.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the sentiments of Jesus on seeing Himself confronted by the executioners with the cross, how He salutes and adores it more tenderly even than did the Apostle Andrew when he said : *O good cross, long have I desired thee and now thou art here, ready for my yearning soul.* He does not wait for it to be placed upon His sacred shoulders. He Himself advances towards it, embraces it, kisses it, and presses it to His heart. He sees that it is the altar on which He is to sacrifice Himself to the obedience and the glory of His Father, that it is the one plank of safety in our own disastrous shipwreck, that it is the sole sign of salvation and the standard of victory against all our enemies.

APPLICATION. With what sentiments do you receive your crosses ? Do you fly from them or do you embrace them ? God never wishes that any one should be without his cross, because without the cross there is no salvation, it being a necessary means of entering into glory. *Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.* But the cross alone is not sufficient to save us. We must try also even to love the cross of adversity, bearing it with resignation, with patience and with generosity after the example of Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let me know that this is thy hand, and that thou, O Lord, hast done it.* (Ps. cviii, 27.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
CHRIST FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND
(Read John vi, 1–15.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the constancy of this devout multitude in clinging to Christ and in following Him even into the desert. They were drawn by the sweetness of His heavenly doctrine and the miracles which He wrought on behalf of the sick and of the infirm. They were unable to separate themselves from Him, either in order to attend to their domestic affairs, or even to give the necessary refection and repose to the body. And so it came to pass that they followed Him for three entire days without partaking of any food. *Behold they have now been with me three days.* They felt certain that He, Who with such solicitude administered to the needs of the infirm, would not fail to provide with all necessaries those who faithfully followed Him.

APPLICATION. And you, do you not feel ashamed at the example of this multitude, you who so soon grow tired and weary of remaining in prayer with Christ and of listening to His doctrine? In your anxiety for your studies or for your other earthly concerns, do you not easily withdraw from prayer or give it up altogether? Keep this maxim fixed well in your mind, that prayer and recourse to God are the best means for obtaining help from heaven whereby perfectly to fulfil all your undertakings.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They cried unto the Lord in their affliction; and he brought them out of their distresses.* (Ps. cvi, 28.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the goodness of Christ in providing for the wants of this devout multitude. The

Apostles wanted them to be sent back to their homes to allay their hunger, unable to find food sufficient in that desert place. But our Blessed Lord consented not. By this miraculous multiplication of the bread He would signify that those who serve God, without any thought of self, and abandon all in order to follow Christ will find all their wants provided for and fully satisfied.

APPLICATION. The world with all its goods cannot satisfy the hearts of its followers, whereas Christ in the midst of evangelical poverty can admirably supply the needs of the body and at the same time satiate the soul of him, who has no other desire or thought than to serve Christ faithfully and to walk in His footsteps.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture, he hath brought me to the waters of refreshment.* (Ps. xxii, 1–2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that our Blessed Redeemer in order to feed the multitude demanded of the Apostles the five loaves and the two fishes which they had. It was not that without these He was unable to feed the multitude, but in order to teach us that the privations we endure in the service of our neighbour turn to our advantage. The Apostles deprived themselves of their five loaves and two fishes, the whole of the poor provision they had, and twelve full baskets they gained, in recompense.

APPLICATION. You also by giving no more than a cup of cold water to your neighbour for the love of God, may gain a hundredfold in this life and in the world to come a torrent of eternal delight. Is not this a very real gain? And do you make so little account of it?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure.* (Ps. xxxv, 9.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE VIA CRUCIS

And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary. (John xix, 17.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that seldom indeed is a malefactor made to carry his own instrument of death. They rather seek to hide it from his sight. Here on the contrary was Jesus forced not only to behold His cross, but to bear it on those sacred shoulders, torn as they were by the scourges, with all His strength exhausted and a crown of thorns upon His head, and all this for His greater torment and mockery. In such guise they send Him forth from the prætorium to Calvary, preceded by a public crier, who at the sound of a trumpet proclaims Him guilty of death. He is surrounded by the executioners who drag Him along with ropes about His neck and hands in company of two malefactors, also sentenced to the same punishment.

APPLICATION. Imagine to yourself that on this journey our Lord turns towards you and says to you : *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* But when will your cross ever be so painful and ignominious as that of Jesus ? If your Lord and God for love of you and for your salvation mounts the hill of Calvary bearing His heavy cross, can you have the courage to refuse to follow after Him carrying yours which is so much lighter, and that for love of Him and in expiation of your sins ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me to hold fast unto my God.* (Ps. lxxii. 28.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how our Lord all weakened and crushed under the heavy weight of the cross, traces His journey more by falls than by His footsteps, renewing all His sufferings and re-opening all His wounds. With the cruel blows of the soldiers and of their ropes He is forced to arise from the ground, by the wicked crowd around He is laden with mockery and with hisses. Oh what excess of barbarity! What an abyss of shame! But it is not alone under the weight of the hard wood that our sorrowful Lord groans. Far more heavy does the weight of our sins, which the divine Father gave Him to atone for, press upon Him. *And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* It is from these He suffers more than from the heavy weight of the cross.

APPLICATION. And you, if you had met our beloved Redeemer on this journey, would you not have gladly relieved Him of this weight of the cross? Why then do you not relieve Him now that it is in your power, by amending your faults and by sharing in His sufferings?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For my iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me.* (Ps. xxxvii, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the executioners, lest Jesus should die before reaching the summit of Calvary where His enemies wished Him to die by crucifixion for His greater ignominy, resolved to take the cross from our Blessed Saviour and cause it to be borne on the shoulders of another, Simon of Cyrene, on whom they laid the cross to carry after Jesus. (Luke xxiii, 26.)

APPLICATION. Our Lord might have given Himself miraculous strength and thus by Himself have carried His cross to the end of His journey. But He wished mysteriously to make known to us that, in order to partake of the fruit of His cross, it is necessary to be a participator in bearing its burden, since the cross of Jesus will not suffice to save us if we do not also carry it with Jesus and after Jesus. Yes, it must be for us also *after Jesus*, tracing His footprints by conforming ourselves to the example of His patience and meekness, of His humility and charity. No one in this world is without the cross, but few are those who carry it with Jesus, after Jesus, and for Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Perfect thou my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved.* (Ps. xvi, 5.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

SIMON OF CYRENE

And going out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon: him they forced to take up his cross. (Matt. xxvii, 32.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Jews fearing lest Jesus might succumb under the load of the cross, found not among so great a multitude one who would lay a hand upon that infamous wood. The soldiers considered it as unbecoming their profession, and the Jews regarded him as accursed who but touched the cross. Hence the executioners constrained a Gentile named Simon, who was a stranger, to take it up and carry it. By this, divine providence would give us to understand that the cross of Christ, so abhorred by the Jews, would be embraced by the Gentiles con-

verted to the faith, and especially by the immense throng of future glorious martyrs.

APPLICATION. You who have been illuminated by the light of faith in holy Baptism, and much more again by the truths of the holy Gospel, what esteem and what account do you make of the cross of Christ? Are you to be numbered among the lovers of the cross or among those haters of it *whose end is destruction?* (Phil. iii, 19.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Guide me in the right path because of my enemies.* (Ps. xxvi, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Simon having been compelled to take the cross upon his shoulders felt at first a great repugnance, so much was it against his will and inclination. Then, however, illuminated and strengthened by divine grace he bore it as we may well suppose with much devotion and cheerfulness. He has come therefore to be regarded as the prototype of those, who bearing their cross generously tread the footsteps of Christ even unto Calvary.

APPLICATION. So too will it be with you. The cross which comes to you in some affliction, in sickness, in the cares or worries of duty or obedience, you often at the beginning take up against your will and inclination. If, however, you will but accept it with resignation, with patience and by making a virtue of necessity, you will soon experience spiritual consolation in the strength of divine grace, peace of conscience and the certain hope of reward.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us: for the years in which we have seen evils.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the cross of Christ was in itself to Simon not only a heavy burden, but also

a shame and an ignominy. And nevertheless by being thus debased in bearing that instrument of infamy upon his shoulders, how glorious does he not now appear before the whole world in the sacred gospel! How worthy even of a holy envy.

APPLICATION. The crosses of this life often appear to you grievous and repugnant to sense, not so much because of the labour and trouble which they entail, as for the shame and humiliation which they mean in the eyes of the world. Do not however lose courage. Be assured that the burden of the cross becomes light if it be borne with patience, that it will be turned into glory for you, not only in the sight of heaven, but also in the eyes of men, who are often wont in the end to admire and venerate those all the more whom formerly they had derided and oppressed.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented him. (Luke xxiii, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that a great crowd of people followed our suffering Lord up to Calvary. Many were moved by a desire to torment or to deride Him, others again by curiosity to behold a spectacle so horrible and so unusual. The devout women indeed were there shedding tears of compassion over Him. But no one was there who could help or relieve Him in the midst of His most grievous sufferings. Many too are those who make profession of

following Christ to Calvary; but in very different ways they carry out their protestations of fidelity to Him. Some there are who seem to follow Him only in order to offer Him insults and to dishonour religion by their worldliness; others again for human ends and interests and for their own advantage and advancement, others in fine follow Him without true interior spirit, being contented with mere exterior observance and appearance. But rare are those who give themselves up to follow Christ perfectly, by conforming themselves to His most sacred example of patience and meekness, of humility and of mortification both interior and exterior.

APPLICATION. Reflect on the motives which actuate your conduct, and on the manner in which you follow our Blessed Lord. See that it be not in exterior observance only, but also in the true spirit of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With my whole heart have I sought after thee.* (Ps. cxviii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that amid all this multitude Jesus would deign to turn only to the weeping and compassionate women and to teach them, saying: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.* (Luke xxiii, 28.) So He spoke, not indeed because tears shed out of compassion for Him in His sufferings are not in themselves praiseworthy, springing from goodness of heart, but to give us to understand that the evils for which He would have us weep are not His sufferings but our own sins, the only cause of His sacred Passion. He forbade not therefore the women their tears, but advised them rather to change the object of their compassion and in this way to bring a remedy to that

evil for which He was pouring forth the divine blood from His sacred veins.

APPLICATION. When you meditate on the passion of our Blessed Lord and feel yourself moved to tears of compassion, make the chief motive of your grief your own sins and your own ingratitude. Thus will your sorrow be more pleasing to God and more profitable to yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine eyes have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 136.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the further words of our Blessed Lord: *For if in the green wood they do these things what shall be done in the dry?* By this He meant to say that if such terrible punishments be laid by the divine justice on one who was innocent, for the faults of others, much greater and severer will be the torments that await the obstinate sinner for his own sins when he shall be cast like dry wood into the fire of the next world!

APPLICATION. Know that the pains not only of hell but also those of purgatory are even more bitter than those which our Blessed Lord endured in His sorrowful Passion, because belonging to a higher and a spiritual order. Pray to Jesus that He may deign to grant you a true and lively contrition for your sins, so that you may escape the flames of both.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and my supplication: give ear unto my tears.* (Ps. xxxviii, 13.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE MOTHER OF SORROWS

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. (John xix, 25.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ Who had many times foretold His Passion to His Apostles, still more clearly had made it known to His holy Mother. And when His sacred Passion began in the garden, He gave her so clear a knowledge of His sufferings that she was as sensible of them all as if she had been present, experiencing the agony and interior sadness, the insults, the blows, the scourges and the thorns. At the moment too when Jesus went forth from the prætorium towards Mount Calvary, His Blessed Mother also went out to meet Him in order to take her part also in the sacrifice of the cross.

APPLICATION. Reflect now, what must have been her anguish on seeing her Son thus disfigured, and on being reciprocally looked upon by Him as He bore the cross upon His sacred shoulders. What glances did they not exchange with one another, more piercing than any wounds! She loved Jesus with an inexpressible love as her own son, but still more so as the Son of the divine Father. If then her grief for the pains which Jesus as man endured was unspeakable, much more so was the anguish she suffered for the outrages done to His divine person. In all these afflictions will not you also compassionate her?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My sorrow is continually before me.* (Ps. xxxvii, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the holy Virgin, knowing that her Son endured the sufferings of His sacred

Passion by decree of His heavenly Father, Who willed to receive full satisfaction for our sins from Jesus as our surety, so submitted and conformed herself to the divine will, that she would have been ready herself to have nailed Him to the cross with her own hands had it been necessary. Together with the life of her Son she offered also her own life to the good pleasure of the Father.

APPLICATION. Marvel at the constancy and courage of Mary. Learn that true virtue consists chiefly in conforming ourselves to the divine will, in the events of life which are most painful and repugnant to our feelings. Be ashamed at the weakness and cowardice which you have hitherto shown in the little disagreeable events of life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would surely have given it.* (Ps. l, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the holy Virgin, knowing that Her divine Son was offering on the cross His sufferings and His life to His heavenly Father on behalf of His executioners and of each one of us guilty men, became an advocate for us herself. She pleaded and prayed to God the Father for pardon for all, and offered Him the blood of her Son in expiation of our crimes. Oh rare charity of Mary, vying even with that of the Father! The excess of charity of the Father was shown precisely in delivering up His only begotten Son to death for us. *He that spared not even his own son, but delivered him up for us all.* The same also has our Blessed Lady done for us at the foot of the cross. *Ut servum redimerent, communem filium tradiderunt*, says St. Bonaventure.

APPLICATION. Will you not then thank her for so much goodness? And why have you not recourse

to her in your necessities? If for you our Blessed Mother has sacrificed the life of her Jesus, how can she now deny you anything which may be for your good? *How hath he not also, with him, given us all things?* (Rom. viii, 32.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give strength unto thy servant and save the son of thine handmaid.* (Ps. lxxxv, 16.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

ON CALVARY

And they came to the place that is called Golgotha, which is the place of Calvary. (Matt. xxvii, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ chose to die on Calvary, a place outside the city of Jerusalem used for the execution of malefactors. This He would do in order to denote that He offered Himself to the divine justice as an expiatory victim for the sins not only of the Jews, but for those of the Gentiles besides. To Calvary therefore may be applied those words of the Psalmist: *He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth* (Ps. lxxiii, 12), as it were at a centre whereto all might have recourse in order to partake of the fruit of the Redemption.

APPLICATION. Are you also ready to serve your neighbour and extend your charity to all without exception and without distinction? True charity excludes no one. Even as he who denies even one article of the Faith cannot be said to possess the true faith, so in like manner true charity cannot exist in your heart if you exclude even a single one of your neighbours.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast made*

known thy power among the nations; with thine arm hast thou redeemed thy people. (Ps. lxxvi, 15–16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Christ chose to be born at midnight in a cave unknown to all. Now He chooses to die publicly at midday on Calvary, and at a time when the solemnity of the paschal Lamb was being celebrated by an immense concourse of people. He Himself was that immaculate Lamb, in virtue of Whose blood we are delivered from the guilt of sin and from eternal punishment. Consider now what must have been the shame of Jesus, at seeing Himself condemned to the most infamous gibbet of the cross in the presence of such a multitude of people come from all parts of Judea and Galilee. By the fame of so many miracles they had conceived the very highest opinion of Him and regarded Him as the true Messiah. Oh how they all now thought themselves deceived and looked on our Lord as an infamous impostor!

APPLICATION. And you, seeing our Lord crushed beneath the weight of so much ignominy and disgrace for the love of you, will you still have the effrontery to cling to points of honour? Will you not at length learn to bear with little slights for the love of Him?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All they that saw me laughed me to scorn; they spoke with their lips and shook their head.* (Ps. xxi, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it was customary to afford relief to condemned malefactors by giving them myrrh mixed with wine. But to Jesus, Whose strength was all exhausted from the many torments He had endured and from the effusion of so much blood, the executioners offered wine mixed with gall. Of this He would taste only so much as sufficed to embitter

His palate, without bringing the least relief. It was in such manner that Jesus atoned for those superfluous delicacies, with which so eagerly you seek the gratification of your palate.

APPLICATION. In this mixture of gall, you may discover an image of your own ingratitude. Whilst you offer to our Lord consolation in your works which are otherwise good, you at the same time mix therewith the gall of a perverse intention and of other imperfections, which embitter the palate of your beloved Redeemer.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* (Ps. lxviii, 22.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE CRUCIFIXION

They crucified him there. (Luke xxiii, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus was again stripped of His garments. This was not without intense pain, because the clothes clung to the wounds, and more intense shame at being thus exposed to the gaze of so vast a multitude. Finally at the command of the executioners He stretched out His arms and placed Himself on the cross, so to expiate the sin of Adam in extending his hand to the forbidden fruit, and the sins of all mankind in disobeying the divine commandments.

APPLICATION. Behold here the divine Person of Jesus Christ Who submits Himself readily to the will of wicked executioners, acknowledging herein the will of His divine Father. And yet you know not how to recognise the will of God in your superiors, and by

obeying man for the love of God to atone for your many acts of disobedience to the will of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All the day I cried unto thee, O Lord; I stretched out my hands unto thee.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the exquisite torture which Jesus suffered by the nails being driven with blows of a hammer into His sacred hands and feet, which being parts of the body containing numberless nerves caused Him indescribable agony. This torture was rendered all the more cruel, because the executioners in order to aggravate the sufferings of our Saviour used rough and blunted nails, thus causing great rents in the sacred flesh. When one hand and one foot had been pierced, the violence made the sinews contract. Wherefore the executioners forced with ropes the other hand and foot to reach the holes prepared for them in the cross, thus producing anew the most intense agony.

APPLICATION. When it is given to you to be placed on the cross of some care, of some duty, of some particular place, do you not try to accommodate that cross to yourself and lighten its burden as much as you can? Instead of resigning yourself to the cross, you yield to annoyance at any fatigue and trouble which is contrary to your inclination. But know you not that the true crucifixion and perfect imitation of the crucified one, consist in accommodating yourself to your cross by your patient suffering of it?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They have pierced my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones.* (Ps. xxi, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the crucifixion of our Blessed Saviour being now completed, the cross was raised on high by the executioners and then flung with

such violence into the hole prepared for it, that the whole of our Lord's sacred body was wrung with agony, the wounds being reopened and their pains renewed. When now at last the Jews beheld Jesus hanging from that infamous tree, what shouts of joy and triumph they raised, even as those *who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things.* (Prov. ii, 14.)

APPLICATION. Adore your Saviour hanging there between heaven and earth. Thank Him with all your heart that He has made Himself a mediator of peace between God and man. His arms extended signify that *the hand of the Lord is not shortened* (Isaias lix, 1), and that whenever you have recourse to Him He will most lovingly welcome you. He will press you to His bosom and will hide you within His wounds. Lastly, beseech Him by that love which has brought Him to hang upon that hard wood, that He would deign to nail and fasten you to the cross, so that you may be able to say with St. Paul: *With Christ I am nailed to the cross.* (Gal. ii, 19.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.* (Ps. xxi, 7.)

PASSION SUNDAY

JESUS HIDES HIMSELF

(Read John viii, 46–59.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the words which are read at the end of this day's Gospel: *Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.* In the same way as God exercises the virtue of the good by trials, punishes the offences of the guilty by correction, and condemns the crimes of the wicked by reprobation, so in like manner

God employs three methods in hiding Himself from souls. In the first place He hides Himself from the good by depriving them of those lights and spiritual consolations which they once enjoyed, leaving them in aridity, in darkness and a prey to doubts and scruples, by which it appears to them that God has turned away and abandoned them altogether. And all this He ordains so as to give them the opportunity of exercising greater virtue.

APPLICATION. If it happen that you find yourself in this state of aridity without having given occasion by reason of your infidelity to our Lord to hide Himself, rest assured that God wishes in this way to try your constancy. As long as you persevère as before in serving God in prayer, practice of penance and mortification in the midst of this desolation, what treasures of merit will not this constancy gain for you! The more our Lord seems to be hidden from you, the more is He intimately present in your soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant, and teach me thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 135.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that our Lord is often wont to hide Himself from those who offend Him, in order to punish them for their faults and defects. Such are they who are careless and heedless regarding exercises of prayer and other spiritual exercises or even omit them altogether, who are negligent about their regular observances and make little account of venial sins, who give entrance into their hearts to inordinate affections. What wonder is it then that our Lord in consequence hides Himself, and turns away from those who thus live far from Him and care little for His grace?

APPLICATION. Beware, if you find yourself in this

state. By frequent and humble recourse to prayer, try to obtain from our Lord that by His grace and mercy He would deign to raise you from a state, which may at any moment bring you to the edge of the precipice. At the same time do not cease to be more on your guard against your sins and your faults, and more diligent in your exercises of piety.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have sworn and I am steadfastly purposed to keep the judgments of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 106.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that our Lord hides Himself finally from the wicked, by abandoning them and letting them fall into other and greater sins and at last into eternal perdition. It was in this manner our Blessed Lord hid Himself from the Jews in going out of the temple. These arrogant men would not accept His doctrine nor acknowledge Him as the Messiah, notwithstanding that He had clearly proved Himself to be such by the many miracles which He wrought among them, but instead they accused Him of being a sorcerer, a magician and one possessed by the devil, insulting Him by a thousand different affronts, and finally attempting to stone Him. Most justly therefore were they abandoned by our Lord, Who permitted them to crucify Him; and by this crime they wrought their final spiritual and temporal ruin. Behold here into what an abyss of utter ruin and destruction the Jewish people, chosen as they had been of God, so highly favoured by Heaven, and protected by the Almighty, fell.

APPLICATION. Similar ruin is sometimes the lot of souls who by reason of their ingratitude and want of correspondence with the divine goodness are abandoned by Heaven, allowed to fall miserably, and finally

by remaining impenitent to end by a sad and deplorable death. In order that you may be preserved from such disaster be not ungrateful to the Divine Goodness, and remember the maxim of the gospel: *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my helper and my protector, O my God, make no delay.* (Ps. xxxix, 18.)

MONDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY

JESUS CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO THIEVES

They crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side and Jesus in the midst. (John xix, 18.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the Jews, not satisfied with inflicting upon Jesus so opprobrious and painful a death, would for His greater ignominy that He should be crucified between two thieves, as the chief of malefactors and as a sacrilegious usurper of the divinity, so that His name and His memory might remain for ever buried in infamy and disgrace. But this infamy long before foretold by Isaias, *and was reputed with the wicked* (liii, 12), was a profound mystery of divine providence ordained for our instruction and for our profit.

APPLICATION. Thank our Lord who, at the cost of such great humiliations, sought only to promote your salvation and eternal happiness. At the same time try to bear willingly that shame or confusion which you may sometimes have to undergo for His glory.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.* (Ps. lxviii, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what lesson to our advantage Christ intended us to draw from His having two

malefactors as His companions upon the cross. It was that the worst sinners whatever without any exception should always have hope of pardon. Dwelling upon earth Christ conversed familiarly with publicans and sinners in order to convert and invite them to repentance : *this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* (Luke xv, 2.) So in a like manner, ascending the cross in company with the wicked, He wished to show that He died for all sinners, and that on His part He is ever ready to pardon them each time they dispose themselves for forgiveness.

APPLICATION. What confidence ought it not then to arouse in your heart to see your crucified Lord in the company of the wicked, sacrificing for them His Blood and His life ! You are a sinner it is true, but you must not on that account lose hope of finding a place on Calvary and of being the companion of Jesus Crucified, Who will help you in life and will not abandon you at death.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Many are the scourges of the sinner, but mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord.* (Ps. xxxi, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Christ would die crucified between two thieves to show that He is the judge of the living and the dead, erecting a tribunal of justice on Calvary like unto that of Jehosaphat. In the valley of Jehosaphat the cross will be the sign of judgment, separating the elect to the right hand and the reprobate to the left, awarding punishment to the reprobate and glory to the elect. The same is done from the cross on Calvary. The wicked thief is condemned, the good one saved.

APPLICATION. What sublime instruction is this for you ! As a follower of Christ remain fastened to the

cross and crucified with Him. Learn also from the two thieves who were also crucified with Him that it will not suffice for your salvation to live so crucified, unless after the example of the good thief you suffer your cross with patience and humility for the love of Jesus crucified for love of you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me in thy strength.* (Ps. liii, 3.)

TUESDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY

JESUS ON THE CROSS

If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself. (John xii, 32.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Christ on the altar of the cross performs the functions of Priest, and offers a propitiatory sacrifice for all of us by immolating to the divine justice not indeed the blood of rams and of lambs, but His own blood and His own life, which were of infinite value. On His head instead of a mitre He wears a crown of thorns, in His hands as a pastoral staff He holds the nails, and for His sacerdotal robes behold His own sacred flesh empurpled with blood and enjewelled with wounds.

APPLICATION. Beholding then this Divine High Priest Who for you offers Himself to His Eternal Father from the cross, will you not at least offer Him a heart truly humble and contrite, so that by the merits of this divine victim you may pay the debt of your sins to the full? Without blood there is no remission, says the Apostle. The Blood then which is offered for us by Jesus is that which you must continually offer to the divine justice to cancel your offences. *Without shedding of blood there is no remission.* (Heb. ix, 22.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is the*

strength of his people, and the protector of the salvation of his anointed. (Ps. xxvii, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Christ teaches and explains His heavenly doctrine from the pulpit of the Cross: *Who of God is made unto us wisdom.* (1 Cor. i, 30.) For what doctrine can you find laid down by the four evangelists which has not been taught you expressly by Jesus crucified, Whose tongue is His sacred wounds, Whose voice is His precious blood, Whose rule or model is His holy cross whereby He measures the greatness of heaven, the littleness of earth, the vanity and vileness of temporal things and the excellence and importance of eternal? Where can you learn so much truth and acquire so much light as in contemplating and listening to Jesus crucified? *And they that approach to his feet, shall receive of his doctrine.* (Deut. xxxiii, 3.)

APPLICATION. Go you likewise to the school of Calvary and you will become more learned than even such a one as Plato, seeing there the true good which you ought to seek and the real evil which you are to avoid. Then will you be able to say with the Apostle: *For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* (1 Cor. ii, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have lifted up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence my help shall come.* (Ps. cxx, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY Christ on Calvary as your captain, Who sets up the cross as His standard and invites you by His example to fight against your enemies in order to gain the kingdom of heaven. The enemies who make the most fierce war against you are your inordinate desires of pleasure, of honour and of riches. See then how Jesus has triumphed over the desire for pleasure,

by sustaining in His sacred Body many wounds and sufferings ; how He has triumphed over the desire of honour by submitting Himself to so much shame and ignominy until He was satiated, *glutted with reproaches*, as the prophet says (Lam. iii, 30) ; how He has triumphed over the desire of the goods of this life by dying bereft of everything, to the extent even of being denied a drop of water to slake His burning thirst, or a winding-sheet of His own for His lifeless body.

APPLICATION. From the example of this your captain learn how you must combat your inordinate desires, because by Holy Baptism you have been made a Christian, enrolled under the standard of the cross, and have become a follower of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I fear no evils, for thou art with me.* (Ps. xxii, 4.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY
THE TITLE ON THE CROSS

And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was : Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. (John xix, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how our Lord at His Circumcision took the name of Jesus at the first shedding of a few drops of blood, and when on Calvary, by the pouring out of His sacred blood from all His veins, publicly declared Himself to be Jesus in the face of His sworn enemies. By bearing this name written in different tongues over the head of the cross, Jesus would signify that from the beginning of His life to the moment of His death He was always our Saviour. On the cross however He was not only called Jesus, which word means Saviour, but He was also called the

Nazarene, which word signifies holy and also flowering, because on the cross He has made the sanctity of all His divine virtues to burst forth with still greater beauty and glory.

APPLICATION. When you first began to serve God in good earnest, you did not wish to be a follower of Christ in name only but also in very deed by devoting yourself to the acquirement of virtue. How far have you kept this resolve up to the present time? And how have you shown it externally and in dealing with your neighbour? God grant that instead of there being seen in you the virtues of a true Christian, the habits and bearing of a worldling be not more conspicuous in you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Jews, seeing the title placed on the cross by Pilate, protested and loudly complained that a crucified man should be called their king. So it is with many Christians. They wish indeed to have Christ for their king but not as one crucified in such abasement, in such poverty, amid so many torments. They would adore and follow Christ but without the cross, in the midst of riches, of honours and of pleasures.

APPLICATION. Be you careful not to resemble persons so unwise, because those who refuse the cross of Christ cannot ever belong to the kingdom of Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Ye kings, understand; be instructed, ye that judge the earth; serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with trembling.* (Ps. ii, 10–11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the firm answer which Pilate gave to the Jews: *What I have written, I have written*

To all the other iniquitous demands of the Jews Pilate had shamefully yielded, condemning Christ to the scourging and finally to the death of the cross. About the title of the cross alone he remained resolute, it being God's will that all should acknowledge Jesus crucified as the true king of mankind: *The Lord hath reigned from the wood.*

APPLICATION. This reply of Pilate is also that which you must give when the devil, the world and the flesh try to change your good purposes and the holy resolutions which you have made at the feet of Jesus Crucified, at the time of prayer or of your other spiritual exercises: *What I have written, I have written.* I am resolved to keep the promises I have made to God, and to persevere in the good which I have begun. Happy then will you be, if you stand firm in resisting the unjust demands of your enemies.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Tell ye among the gentiles that the Lord hath reigned.* (Ps. xcv, 10.)

THURSDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY
THE PARTING OF HIS GARMENTS

After they had crucified him, they divided his garments, casting lots. (Matt. xxvii, 35.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Jews after having inflicted upon the body of Jesus every possible suffering, lacerating His sacred head with the thorns, His hands and feet with the nails and all the members of His body with the scourges, would moreover deprive Him of all else that He might call His own. First of all they divided His garments among themselves under His very eyes, casting lots upon His inner tunic. Over this injury also our Blessed Lord deeply grieved, seeing therein an image of a grievous wrong

done to Him by mankind. Even among those professing to be His followers there are those who of worldly goods, which are signified by the exterior garments, wish to secure as large a share to themselves as possible, whilst for spiritual goods, signified by the interior tunic, they do not fear to risk them even for the merest trifles.

APPLICATION. This disorder, so frequent among worldlings, is by no means rare even among those who aspire to higher things, who are continually seen striving to obtain some post of honour, or to acquire the repute of great learning, whilst to acquire virtue and the perfection of their state of life they have little thought. Be careful on your part not to offer our Lord similar cause of complaint.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots. But thou, O Lord, remove not thy help far from me.* (Ps. xxi, 19–20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the executioners, whilst rending the garments of Jesus, outrage at the same time His good name, loading Him with grievous injuries, ridiculing His miracles and deriding His sufferings. See here a God dying upon the cross for the salvation of mankind, and how in His agony He is treated by men! Scoffers at those who do good are never wanting in this world. But to be scoffed at, even amid the greatest afflictions, this is bitter suffering indeed.

APPLICATION. It may perhaps also happen to you that, when oppressed by some infirmity of body or grief of soul, you are censured or reproved without having given any cause whatever for it. Comfort yourself then by the thought of Jesus blasphemed and outraged as He hung on the cross.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All they that saw me laughed me to scorn ; they spoke with their lips and shook their head.* (Ps. xxi, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Satan finally made a last attempt on our Blessed Lord by means of that cry of the Jews : *Let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him.* (Matt. xxvii, 42.) The devil saw that Jesus was sacrificing His life to save souls, and so by the mouth of the Jews he invites and urges Him to descend from the cross, inspiring Him with the hope of saving thereby all those souls of His chosen people.

APPLICATION. The devil also often employs a similar temptation against those who are striving to perfect themselves in their own state of life. He seeks to make them forsake the good which they are actually achieving in the place or office assigned them, perhaps by obedience, putting before them the hope of doing greater good elsewhere where they may work according to their own will and caprice. Never therefore give ear to those who propose to you to abandon the cross imposed upon you either by duty or by obedience. By acting thus you will deserve to have said of you as of Christ : *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.* (Phil. ii, 8.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have not turned aside from thy testimonies.* (Ps. cxviii, 157.)

FRIDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY

FIRST WORD UPON THE CROSS

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. (Luke xxiii, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus having remained silent on the cross amidst the most excruciating sufferings and the greatest insults, finally opened His sacred

lips. The first word He utters is a prayer of supplication to His Divine Father for the forgiveness of His executioners. This He did in order to give the first place of honour to charity, the queen of all the virtues, and principally to that most excellent form of charity, rendering good for evil and doing good to our enemies. Jesus on the cross resembled the glowing iron which the more it is struck the more resplendent it becomes. At His last supper our Divine Master had inculcated the precept of charity above all the rest. Now from the cross the first lesson He teaches and leaves to the faithful is that of a charity, which displays so much greater perfection as it extends itself to those who are the most unworthy of it.

APPLICATION. Apply this lesson to yourself, and see that you make not more account of other virtues than of that of charity towards those who are undeserving of it, and even towards your enemies.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If mine enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne it.* (Ps. liv, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ was not satisfied with Himself alone pardoning His executioners. He would publicly implore their pardon of His Divine Father, extenuating and excusing as far as He could the unutterable enormity of that terrible deicide, under the plea of their ignorance, so as the more easily to obtain the forgiveness of their crime: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* What a sublime example this of pardoning injuries!

APPLICATION. When you suffer some annoyance or wrong from those with whom you live, or from others, possibly you are ready to forgive so far as barely to observe the precept of charity. But do you pardon them fully? If meantime you procure that your

offender be punished by lawful authority by making much of the injury received, or if you desire that he be at least punished by God above, your forgiveness is not complete; you do not perfectly observe the precept of charity. Jesus Christ for your instruction not only pardoned His executioners but also prayed that they might not be punished by His divine Father.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and merciful, long suffering and of much mercy.* (Ps. lxxxvi, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY with what tenderness and with what earnestness Jesus presented this petition to His divine Father: *Jesus autem dicebat*, which means that Jesus kept on praying. He did not pray once only but many times, in various ways repeating His petition not with His lips and heart only but also by the incessant cry of His sacred blood and wounds. With sighs and with tears He offered the merits of His sufferings and death on behalf of His executioners, in such manner that our Blessed Saviour could not have prayed more tenderly and efficaciously for those, who might have given Him life, than He pleaded for those who were wickedly depriving Him of it.

APPLICATION. And does not this example fill you with shame and confusion because whilst you forgive some wrong done you, you still bear in mind the injury which you have received rather than the pardon which you have granted? This you show by the very words you use, by your abrupt manner, by your denying the offender those acts of courtesy and charity which before the offence you would not have withheld. In fine, to pardon injuries to the full, and to render good for evil, manifests a virtue which is of the most perfect and at the same time extremely rare.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If I have made a return to them that did evils to me, let me deservedly fall empty before my enemies.* (Ps. vii, 5.)

SATURDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY

SECOND WORD UPON THE CROSS

Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise. (Luke xxiii, 43.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the wonderful conversion of the good thief. He beheld the invincible patience and meekness of our dying Redeemer, and that divine charity in praying to His heavenly Father for those who were putting Him to death. Aided by divine grace, he recognised in Jesus the promised Messias and the true Son of God Who was suffering to expiate the sins of mankind. He began to compassionate Him, to proclaim His innocence, and to rebuke his companion who reviled and blasphemed their common Saviour. Oh what a sublime act ! what exalted virtue in this good thief, who feared not to raise his voice in favour and in defence of Jesus crucified before all those who insulted Him as a malefactor !

APPLICATION. Do you also learn from this penitent as you behold your Jesus Crucified to compassionate Him in His sufferings, to detest your own sins which were the cause of them, to atone for the injuries which are done Him every day by sinners, and to correct those over whom you may exercise any authority or may have any power.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be mindful of thy word unto thy servant, in which thou hast given me hope.* (Ps. cxviii, 49.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what it was that the good thief implored of Jesus. He did not ask to be released

from his sufferings, nor to be detached from his cross, nor for any of this life's goods. He asked only for those of the next: *Lord remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.* See here the great faith of him who had been a murderer, confessing as the Lord and Ruler of an immortal kingdom One Who hangs there from an infamous gibbet, at the time too when He is being outraged and derided by all! He asks only for a remembrance from the throne of Him Who had also been his companion upon the cross.

APPLICATION. At the feet of Jesus Crucified what are the requests that you make? On seeing your Saviour reviled and suffering for your sake, is it for worldly possessions, honours, riches and comforts for this present life that you are to petition Him? Christ by His Blood and His death sought only to win for you, not indeed temporal and perishable goods, but spiritual and eternal ones. What you must therefore ask Him for above all, is to make you worthy and strong to carry the cross that so you may be a participator in His glory.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles, therefore we will not fear.* (Ps. xlv, 2–3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the reply of our Blessed Lord to the petition of the good thief: *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* It was as if He had said: You, who are now suffering with Me on the cross, on this very day you in My company will be reigning with Me in paradise, you will be the first among the elect who shall pass immediately without the least delay from suffering to glory, from the gibbet to the throne.

APPLICATION. Now if our Lord remunerates so munificently a thief, who had lived in rapine and in

plunder, in reward for so sublime a confession made by him on Calvary, what must not he expect who serves God in life and in death, and who remains ever the faithful companion of Jesus Crucified, bearing His cross? At the same time, however, behold the secret judgments of God. Of the two crucified with Christ one was saved and the other lost. If the former inspire you with hope, the latter should keep you in fear and encourage you to bear your cross patiently in expiation of your sins.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.* (Ps. xviii, 10.)

PALM SUNDAY

TRIUMPHAL ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

(Read Matt. xxi, 1–10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Blessed Lord, though at all times a lover of humility, would however teach us three great truths by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on this day. The first is, that in going to death Christ wished to make known to us that He regarded it as a glory to die crucified for mankind. On many occasions when speaking to His Apostles of His death, He called it an exaltation, and to-day He goes forward in triumph to meet the Cross, so as to let us see more clearly still that He reputes Himself honoured by suffering for us so ignominious a death.

APPLICATION. Does not this suffice to fill you with confusion, you who hold in such small account suffering somewhat for the love of Jesus or bearing a little shame for His service and glory? Christ goes in triumph to embrace the cross for your sake, and you fly from it, esteeming it only as ignominy.

Affections and resolutions. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

Consider secondly another truth which our Blessed Lord teaches us by this His triumphal entry. It is this, that the love and benevolence, which He showed by this joyful and festive return to the faithless city of Jerusalem, He still uses towards those souls who have outraged and constrained Him to depart from them. Each time they dispose themselves to give Him entrance into their hearts and to receive Him with that reverence which is due to Him, there is He ready to welcome them.

Application. By not corresponding to grace and by your ingratitude you have, alas! obliged our Lord to retire and hide Himself from your soul. Thus He has deprived you of His lights and of His aids and of His spiritual consolations. Now it is time you should come forward and receive Him triumphantly and after the example of the multitude divest yourself of your evil habits and cast them at His feet, holding in your hands the palms of victory over your passions and olive branches which are symbols of true peace with God. If you act thus your Lord will more than ever enrich you with His gifts and graces, like the Emperors who on returning in triumph after battle, munificently rewarded the people who received them with honour and applause.

Affections and resolutions. *The Lord will not cast off his people until justice be turned into judgment.* (Ps. xciii, 15.)

Consider thirdly what our Lord would signify to us by the tears He shed amid the acclamations of the multitude, at the thought of the blindness and fickleness of that unfortunate nation. They proclaim Him now the Messias and Son of God, and in a short time

will cry out *Crucify Him*, thus drawing on themselves the spiritual and temporal ruin of that people once so dear to God. Our Lord would thus make known to us how displeasing to Him is the inconstancy and fickleness of those who honour Him as their Lord, and soon afterwards outrage Him by their sins, thus changing their reverence into contempt.

APPLICATION. Enter into yourself and see how steadfast you are in your good resolutions and in the practice of virtue, because it is perseverance alone which merits the crown.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have not turned aside from thy judgments, for thou hast appointed for me a law.* (Ps. cxviii, 102.)

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

THIRD WORD UPON THE CROSS

When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. (John xix, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how our Blessed Lady stood beneath the Cross contemplating the sufferings of her well-beloved Son. As many darts wounded her heart as there were rents imprinted on that Divine Body all torn and streaming with blood. Thus she could say with even better right than holy Job: *My eye abideth in bitterness.* (Job xvii, 2.) What sorrow must have filled the soul of the Divine Son at witnessing His Holy Mother suffering so much for His sake! And will you not compassionate our Lord in this deep sorrow? In this painful condition Jesus does not cease to be mercifully providing for our salvation, saying to the Holy Virgin: *Woman, behold thy son.*

For by these words our Lord assigned St. John to her as her son and in him all the faithful who keep close to Christ. At the same time He made St. John, and all mankind, heirs of that love which the Holy Virgin bore her Divine Son Jesus.

APPLICATION. Thank our Lord with all your heart for the great love and the marvellous favours bestowed upon you in those last moments of His life. In having recourse to our Blessed Lady, remind her often of the obligation imposed on her by Jesus when dying on the Cross to love you with the tenderness of a mother, as her own son and as the brother of Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come, ye children, hearken unto me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* (Ps. xxxiii, 12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that just as our Blessed Lord in saying to the Holy Virgin, *Behold thy son* left us as the heirs of that love which she bore Jesus, so in like manner in saying to the disciple, *Behold thy mother*, Jesus left to St. John and in him to all the faithful the inheritance of that filial love wherewith He loved His Blessed Mother.

APPLICATION. In this sweet dispensation of our Lord, recognise the obligation imposed on you of loving and reverencing the Sacred Virgin as your true Mother, and of obeying and honouring her after the example of Jesus. If on your part you fulfil the duties of a good son towards our Blessed Lady, she will also be a true mother to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid.* (Ps. cxv, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that there are three kinds of children of our Blessed Lady. Some are her children

inasmuch as their souls are animated by sanctifying grace; and therefore they are united and incorporated members of Christ. Hence the Holy Virgin being the Mother of Christ is also the Mother of the mystical body of Christ: *The Mother of Christ is the Mother of the members of Christ*, says Gilbertus. Others again are children of the Holy Virgin and still closer members of Christ, because they dedicate themselves with special love and reverence to the service of Christ and His Holy Mother. Finally, there are those who are children of our Lady and members of Christ, because they glory in being the inseparable companions of Christ and of the Sacred Virgin upon Mount Calvary.

APPLICATION. These last are the children of predilection, who bear off the honour of intimate brotherhood with Christ and of being specially devoted children of Mary, at the foot of the Cross. To this class you must aspire, to this class you must belong. Beg this favour of our Mother most sorrowful.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath cleaved unto thee; thy right hand hath upheld me.* (Ps. lxii, 9.)

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK
FOURTH WORD UPON THE CROSS

Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, said: I thirst. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth. (John xix, 28, 29.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus seeing Himself near to death, cried out: *I thirst.* Thus would He make known to all, the corporal thirst which He suffered so terribly in those last moments of His life, from the fatigue of so many journeys, the loss of so much blood and the inward anguish which He endured.

Our Lord would manifest this most bitter torment of thirst on the Cross, so as to make us understand what a price He paid to atone for our sins of intemperance and of gluttony.

Application. Often recall to mind how Christ whilst dying on the Cross was deprived of all alleviation in His bitter thirst. Hence do not seek superfluous delicacies for your palate, nor complain of what you may not have, although it may seem to you necessary or convenient for your use.

Affections and resolutions. *Thirsty their soul fainted in them, and they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them out of their distresses.* (Ps. cvi, 5–6.)

Consider secondly that our Lord cried out: *I thirst*, to give us to understand the spiritual thirst He felt of suffering all that had been ordained by His divine Father, and of perfectly fulfilling the divine command. This command of the divine Father was not a general one to sacrifice His life for us in any manner whatever, but it was a very definite decree, in all its circumstances predicted by the Prophets. Among these predictions it had been foretold that in His thirst He should be given vinegar to drink: *And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* (Ps. lxviii, 22.) Our Blessed Lord then seeing His last moment of life was approaching cried out: *I thirst*, so that this torment, also set down as a final act of obedience to His divine Father, might not be wanting.

Application. Oh how different is your conduct in conforming yourself to the divine Will! In order to escape the least inconvenience or suffering how frequently you have omitted to do the Will of God, whereas Christ when dying on the Cross asks for and

seeks after fresh torments in order to conform Himself in the least details to the good pleasure of His Heavenly Father. What confusion and shame ought not this reflection to arouse in your soul!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Our soul waiteth for the Lord; for in him shall our heart rejoice.* (Ps. xxxii, 20–21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus cried out: *I thirst*, in order to manifest the spiritual thirst with which He also burned so ardently for the salvation of souls. For this He would most willingly have remained suffering still longer on the cross, had such been the good pleasure of His Heavenly Father. Hence in that cry uttered by Christ to His divine Father: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?* He made complaint at seeing that special assistance fail Him, by which He had been so miraculously upheld during life amid afflictions so many and so grievous. At the same time He desired to remain still longer on the cross, offering His Blood and His sufferings to satisfy the divine Justice more fully and to move the heart of God to compassion for souls. This was the thirst which above all tormented our Blessed Lord, whilst too He saw that for very many souls the price He was paying for their ransom and the treasure of His infinite merits would be of little or no avail.

APPLICATION. Strive earnestly so to work out your own salvation and promote also that of your neighbour that you may offer relief to the thirst of your Blessed Redeemer. Jesus was given vinegar mingled with gall by the wicked Jews to relieve the corporal thirst which consumed Him; God grant that you may not make Him a similar offer in His spiritual thirst for souls by being to them rather a hindrance than a help.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him and upon them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their souls from death.* (Ps. xxxii, 18–19.)

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK
LAST WORDS UPON THE CROSS

Jesus therefore when he had taken the vinegar said: It is consummated. (John xix, 30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how Jesus before expiring on the Cross saw that He had now accomplished all that had been given Him to do by His divine Father, and all that had been prophesied in Holy Scripture regarding His life and death. Then He cried out: *It is consummated*, to show thereby that He died with great contentment in having, during His stay of thirty-three years upon earth, entirely accomplished the Will of His Heavenly Father. Oh! what an intense consolation it will be for you also if at the end of your life you are able to say that you have ever sought the divine Will, and been always wholly faithful to your duty.

APPLICATION. Examine yourself, and if you find that up to the present time you have not been remiss in your duty, continue steadfastly in the same course until the end so that you may die a happy death. But if on the other hand you perceive that you fail in many things, seek to correct yourself betimes. Otherwise death which comes like an unexpected thief in the night, will be for you not without its bitterness.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wait on the Lord and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land; when the wicked perish, thou shalt see it.* (Ps. xxxvi, 34.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus cried out: *It is*

consummated, to denote that on His part He had fulfilled all that was required for the complete and full accomplishment of our redemption. For He had most abundantly satisfied divine justice for us by the sacrifice of the cross, had made full atonement to the divine honour violated by our sins, and had merited for us all those powerful graces and helps to liberate us from sin and to attach us to virtue.

APPLICATION. Now it is for you to do your part, since without your co-operation the merits of all Jesus has done and suffered for you will be of no avail. Therefore St. Paul said: *I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh.* (Coloss. i, 24.) In order to enjoy the fruit of the merits of Christ, it is necessary that in our measure we conform ourselves to the sufferings of Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am thine, O save me; for I have sought thine ordinances.* (Ps. cxviii, 94.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how that which Christ said when dying on the Cross will also be said by you at the end of your life: *It is consummated.* For then pleasures will have passed away, honours and applause will have vanished; penances and humiliations will be at an end, but with this difference, that to earthly pleasures and honours succeed pain and confusion, whereas penance and humiliations are followed by joy and by glory.

APPLICATION. In what way will you when you come to die be able to say: *It is consummated*? Happy will you be if in that last moment you can say with St. Paul: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day.* (2 Tim. iv, 7, 8.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Seek ye God and your soul shall live.* (Ps. lxviii, 33.)

MAUNDY THURSDAY

SUFFERINGS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

They shall deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified. (Matt. xx, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what our Blessed Lord endured on the cross from the sufferings of His sacred body, the anguish of His soul, and from the privation of all solace or comfort. His body is all torn. From all its wounded members flows a torrent of blood. The hands and feet are rent by nails and the head is pierced with a crown of thorns. Moreover the soul of our Blessed Lord is oppressed by such excessive bitterness and sadness, that these far surpass the tortures of the body. He is abandoned by His friends, by His disciples and even by His heavenly Father. He receives not the least solace either from earth or from heaven. Finally He is derided, insulted and blasphemed by all the people. Were you to see even a wicked assassin suffer the smallest part of what Jesus endured, you could not but be moved to compassion for him, and how much more were an innocent friend of yours so to suffer!

APPLICATION. Ask yourself then how it is that you are not moved to tender compassion at so great sufferings of the Man-God, Who by His blood has prepared you a laver wherein to cleanse away your infirmities, and to extinguish the eternal fire which you have merited by your sins.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.* (Ps. l, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus having made Him-

self your surety, might have satisfied the divine justice for you by a single sigh or by a single drop of blood. Nevertheless He wished to atone for your sins by an intense accumulation of pain, and by the excruciating death of the cross. Thus from the immensity of the price which He paid you may recognise the enormity of your debt, and from the excess of His torments you may understand the excess of your malice.

APPLICATION. Does not all this suffice to make you realise that sin, and offences against the divine Majesty, are in themselves a greater evil than even the death of a God such as that which He chose in order to atone for sin?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me.* (Ps. xxxvii, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus has endeavoured by this abyss of suffering to make known to you His excessive love for you, and at the same time wholly to win over to Him your heart. *He loved me, and delivered himself for me.* Any one who suffers even a slight inconvenience for your sake, will thereby touch at once your heart and gain your affection. Shall not then the Son of God by such an excess of sufferings which He undergoes for you also win your heart?

APPLICATION. Can you rest satisfied with yourself by merely not re-opening again our Lord's sacred wounds and crucifying Him anew by mortal sin? Will you not rather hasten to make Him a return of love for love, and to offer your whole self to the divine good pleasure? It was thus that Jesus offered His entire being for you, as a sacrifice of propitiation to His divine Father.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength . . . my refuge, and my deliverer.* (Ps. xvii, 2–3.)

GOOD FRIDAY
DEATH OF JESUS

Jesus having cried with a loud voice gave up the ghost. (Mark xv, 37.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that this is the day on which your God, your Creator and your Redeemer dies. He expires uttering so strong a cry that it makes all creatures mourn and awakens a sorrowful re-echo throughout the whole universe. Thus would He teach you how you also must grieve over this death of which you are the true cause. It is not from the envy of the Jews, nor by the avarice of Judas, nor the injustice of Pilate, that Jesus dies, but because having made Himself your surety He wished to atone for your sins: *He was wounded for our iniquities.* (Isaias lii, 5.)

APPLICATION. On this day then will you not also grieve sincerely for your sins and heartily detest them? Even the perfidious Jews when on Calvary they saw all nature mourning the death of its Creator *returned striking their breasts.* If then the Jews united with inanimate creation to grieve over the death of our Lord, will your heart alone be harder than the very stones and more stubborn than those of that perverse people?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me, where is thy God?* (Ps. xli, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus dying on the cross for your sins demands that you not only renounce and detest them with interior and true sorrow, but that at the same time you satisfy the divine justice for them. *Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon*

the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice. (1 Peter ii, 24.) Christ endured the sufferings of His passion and of His death upon the cross, not that you might be wholly exempted from all atonement on your part, but that He might be your model in paying your debts to God and that you might enrich your sufferings, which in themselves are of no value, with His merits. Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example *that you should follow his steps.* (1 Peter ii, 21.)

APPLICATION. Look at the crucifix and consider the terrible atonement which our Blessed Saviour has made for sins which in reality were not His. Up to the present moment what reparation have you made for your offences? Begin on this day to do penance for your sins with a resolution to continue to do so in future.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I acknowledge my iniquity, my sin is always before me.* (Ps. l, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what our dying Jesus says to you by the mouth of St. Paul: *Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them.* (2 Cor. v, 15.) Jesus dies on the cross, true God and true Man, plunged in an abyss of insults and of contumely, and into an ocean of bitterness and of suffering, in order that you, being dead to sin and risen to the life of grace, may by virtue of His death no longer seek a life of ease or a life according to the caprice and the dictates of your passions or inordinate inclinations. You must on the contrary live for that divine Lord, Who at the cost of His own infinitely precious life and divine blood, ransomed you from an eternal death of sin and punishment. You must resign yourself entirely to the divine

good pleasure and employ all the powers of your soul and the senses of your body in the service of Christ, ready if necessary to give also your blood and life for your Saviour.

APPLICATION. And after all does it not seem to you most just that you, vile servant that you are, should live and die for Jesus, Who for your sake spent His life and finally died for you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am thy servant, O give me understanding.* (Ps. cxviii, 125.)

SATURDAY IN HOLY WEEK
BURIAL OF JESUS

Joseph taking the body wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new monument. (Matt. xxvii, 59–60.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the great change that took place at the death of Christ. When our Blessed Lord was born He had not a house wherein to find shelter. Throughout life He suffered hunger and many privations, and when dying on the cross he was even denied a drop of water to assuage His thirst. But now, on the contrary, after Jesus had expired nothing was wanting to Him. The tears and affection of the devout, the company and the reverence of the disciples, the rich abundance of ointments, the splendour of a noble sepulchre, all now were His. And so the prophecy concerning Him was fulfilled: *And his sepulchre shall be glorious.* (Isaias xi, 10.) Such is the way of divine Providence. Those who during life have abounded in the good things of this world, at death find that all things fail. Those who in life were poor and needy for God, abound at death in all good things. In life neglected, hated and

oppressed, in death they shall be honoured, envied and glorified.

APPLICATION. Happy you also if you have lived even to the moment of death in the embrace of the cross of Christ, in poverty, in suffering and in contempt! How much better thus will it be for you when you come to die, how much more happy will you in consequence then be!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* (Ps. cxiv, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the generosity of Joseph and Nicodemus, who previously from fear of the Jews had remained hidden disciples of Christ. Now, however, they come courageously to Calvary, take down the divine body from the cross, and venerate it in sight of all the people. Such is the effect of the death of saints and much more of Christ's, to generate sentiments of piety and strength in the soul. When the sacred corpse had been taken down from the cross, it was reverently laid in the arms of His Virgin Mother, so that where Jesus, on entering the world had begun His life, He might once more repose when leaving it. Consider here all the sorrow that is awakened in the heart of Mary, as she contemplates the face and lifeless form of her dear and only begotten Son, all those members of His so terribly lacerated and torn. At the foot of the cross Mary's heart had been pierced at the sight of her dying Son. Now as she holds Him in her arms she is pierced and wounded anew at the sight of His dead body, so deformed, while at the same time the absence of His blessed soul deprived her of His most sweet words and of His most loving looks.

APPLICATION. Compassionate with all your heart our Blessed Lady in this her loneliness and desolation. At the same time console yourself at the return of her Jesus now dead into the arms of Mary. For she is thus declared to be the channel and means of every good for us. As the work of redemption began in the Holy Virgin at the birth of Christ and was completed at His death, so through her we must derive the beginning of the life of grace and attain to the life of glory hereafter.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.* (Ps. lxxxv, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that our Lord was buried in a new sepulchre hewn out of a rock, sealed and guarded by soldiers, so that His Resurrection might be all the more glorious and undoubted. Such also should our hearts be, in order that they may keep therein Jesus crucified and may participate in His glory. They should be new as the sepulchre was, that is divested of all irregular inclinations of the old man; firm as a rock in the execution of the good resolutions made during these days of grace, hewn and worked by the chisel of mortification and of penance; sealed and guarded by the custody of the senses and by interior recollection.

APPLICATION. In this way your heart too will become a worthy habitation for Jesus crucified, and you also will merit to be a partaker in the glory of His Resurrection.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 3.)

EASTER SUNDAY
RESURRECTION OF JESUS
(Read Mark xvi, 1–7.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when Christ had expired on the cross His blessed soul descended into Limbo, where the souls of the just had for a length of years sighed for the coming of the Saviour, to liberate them from that dark prison and conduct them into the enjoyment of the beatific vision. Our Blessed Lord might by the power of His voice alone have called them forth from the tomb, just as He had done to Lazarus. But in the same way as it was through an excess of goodness and charity that He came on earth in person in order to redeem us, so in a like manner would He descend into Limbo in person in order to rejoice the souls of the just who were detained there. Try and imagine then the intense joy and jubilation of those holy Fathers at the clear vision of the soul and divinity of Christ. What an outburst of praise and thanksgiving for such goodness on His part!

APPLICATION. But greater still is the goodness which our Lord displays towards you, when in Holy Communion He descends into the recesses of your heart, where He has so often met with a reception unworthy of Him. Consider moreover that only the soul and divinity of Jesus descended into Limbo to rejoice the souls of the just, whereas into your heart He comes with body, soul and divinity all in order to sanctify at one and the same time both your soul and your body.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have slept and have taken my rest, and I have risen up.* (Ps. iii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the soul of Jesus after

remaining in Limbo until the third day, a sufficient space of time to prove His death, now goes forth to the sepulchre where lay His lifeless body, together with that numerous company of holy souls. There He showed them that blood-stained body, all its members torn with rents and wounds, that so they might comprehend what sufferings it had cost Him to free them from that prison and procure for them the joys of heavenly glory. Into what thanksgiving did they not then break forth at such a spectacle! How great their regret at not having had in life such an example of suffering before their eyes as you have, in order to have then been animated to suffer still more!

APPLICATION. Learn then in good time to profit by this example. For if *Christ ought to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory* (Luke xxiv, 26) do you wish to be His companion in glory without being His companion in suffering?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct me in thy truth and teach me, for thou art God my Saviour.* (Ps. xxiv, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the blessed soul of Jesus, now reunited to His body, communicated to it the gifts of glory, clothing it with great beauty and splendour and majesty. Thus, too, in heaven will the body of Christ constitute the supreme beatitude and delight of the senses of the elect, just as His soul and divinity will be that of their souls. Our Lord retained the wounds which now shone with more splendour than the sun, in His hands, feet and sacred side, in order to make manifest that the body which arose in such majesty on this Easter day was the self-same that died upon the cross, differing not in its nature but only in glory.

APPLICATION. Do you also rejoice with Jesus in this His great glory. It was indeed His right and His due from the very first moment of His life upon earth, but He wished also to merit it by so much suffering in order to communicate it likewise to you, and in the measure in which during your lifetime you shall have resembled Him in His sufferings. Since then this is so, strive as far as possible to subject the body to the spirit and to mortify it. The more you shall have done so in this life for the love of God, the more you will, like Christ, have in it a glorious resurrection. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.* (Rom. vi, 5.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Shall not my soul be subject to God? For from him is my salvation.* (Ps. lxi, 2.)

MONDAY AFTER EASTER SUNDAY

APPEARANCE TO OUR BLESSED LADY

I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you. (John, xiv, 18.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how just it was that our glorious Redeemer should make His first apparition to His Blessed Mother. She before all others and more than all others had a claim to rejoice in the glory of His resurrection, who more closely than all others had participated in the sorrows of His sacred passion. For one entire day and for two nights had the Holy Virgin remained in extreme anguish of soul at the death of her divine Son, but at the same time firm and unshaken in her belief in His resurrection and wholly inflamed with longing desires for it.

APPLICATION. Such, too, is the ordinary way our

Lord deals with those souls who are dear to Him, when about to confer on them some singular favour. He enkindles in their hearts a most ardent eagerness to receive that favour, so that with pious affections and fervent supplications they may dispose themselves to merit it. Therefore in order to make yourself less unworthy of any grace or choice gift from heaven, cherish beforehand an ardent desire which may dispose you for it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Arise, O my glory, arise, psalter and harp.* (Ps. lvi, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what must have been the joy of the Blessed Mother at this glorious appearance. Intense indeed had been the sorrow of the Blessed Mother on Calvary at witnessing the pains and ignominy of her divine Son on the cross. Intense too was the joy she now experienced at seeing Him risen again to an immortal life, clothed with glory and with splendour. She made as if to prostrate herself at the feet of her divine Son to adore Him, but He most tenderly embracing her pressed her to His bosom and gave her entrance into His divine heart, to enable her still better to rejoice with Him on so joyful a day.

APPLICATION. Congratulate our Blessed Lady most heartily, and beseech her to obtain for you the grace that one day you may rejoice with her for all eternity in heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *According to the multitude of sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* (Ps. xciii, 19.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that with the appearance of Jesus the Holy Virgin beheld at the same time that numerous company of holy Fathers and of holy souls,

among whom was her spouse St. Joseph and her holy parents, all of whom rejoiced with her and venerated her as their queen. These again were accompanied by many choirs of angels who with joyous and festive melody sang: *Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven, alleluia.*

APPLICATION. Reflect here what sentiments of exultation and joy must have been awakened in the heart of the Holy Virgin. Learn from this how munificently those who are the faithful companions of Jesus upon Calvary are remunerated in this life, and how much more in the life to come.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give thy strength unto thy servant and save the son of thine handmaid . . . thou, O Lord, hast helped me and hast comforted me.* (Ps. lxxxv, 16–17.)

TUESDAY AFTER EASTER SUNDAY
APPEARANCE TO THE HOLY WOMEN

(Read Mark xvi, 1–9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the holy women were the first to receive by the mouth of the angel news of the resurrection of Christ. This special favour they merited because, not satisfied with having followed Christ to Calvary, they accompanied Him also to the sepulchre. They were solicitous moreover to return again in order to honour His sacred body by anointing it with precious spices, and they were not deterred therefrom either by the difficulty of removing the stone from the sepulchre or by fear of the guards.

APPLICATION. Behold here the manner in which you also are to obtain special graces from our Lord. Do not content yourself with what you have already done in the service of God. Study to serve God more fervently each day, and ever to practise fresh and still

greater virtue, *Forgetting* with the Apostle *the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before.* (Phil. iii, 13.) This you must also do ever with due submission to the laws and practices of Holy Church, according to the example of the holy women who were careful to observe the precept of the Jewish Sabbath.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have run in the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 32.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the fervent constancy of Magdalene at the sepulchre. She was bidden by the angel not to seek Christ, Who was risen, among the dead ; notwithstanding she cannot bring herself to depart, but still continues to seek diligently after Him. By two angels of exceeding great beauty she was asked, why she wept : *Why weepest thou?* She ceased not to weep because she could not find her beloved. In a word, he who truly loves Jesus cannot live without Him. No other created thing can satisfy his heart ; outside of Jesus he desires nothing. Consider moreover how munificently were her longing desires now satisfied by our Lord. He allowed her first of all to behold Him in the guise of a gardener. Then calling her by her name and manifesting Himself to her, He inebriated her soul with a flood of divine sweetness !

APPLICATION. How well are the tears spent, how richly the labours rewarded of those who desire no other love, seek no other love than that of Jesus ! Pray to this penitent and fervent saint that she would deign to obtain for you also this ardent love of hers, so that in your life you may have no other care than that of spending it in the service of Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, the God of*

my salvation, I have cried in the day, and in the night before thee. (Ps. lxxxvii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how our Lord, after having manifested Himself to Magdalene, showed Himself likewise to the other holy women who had come to the sepulchre. Thus did our Blessed Lord by His delay increase their spiritual consolations, and reward them for that devout piety which they had shown in wishing to anoint His sacred body. In fine Jesus is a master Who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity or courtesy; neither can you do the least service for Him even in this life without receiving a great reward for it. See then the recompense which the fervent piety of these holy women wins from our Lord. They are constituted messengers of the resurrection to the disciples, and even apostles of the apostles: *Go, tell my brethren.*

APPLICATION. Are you not also touched at hearing Jesus Christ with His own lips honouring His disciples with the title of brothers? Study to imitate Him in your manner of life so that you may be His brother not in name only, but much more in the virtues which you exercise.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I remembered God, and was delighted.* (Ps. lxxvi, 4.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER SUNDAY

APPEARANCE TO ST. PETER

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. (Luke xxiv, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the message of the holy women regarding the resurrection of our Lord was considered by the Apostles as a mere delusion and an idle tale. But Peter and John, desirous to know

the truth more accurately, ran together to the sepulchre. John came first to the sepulchre but would not enter in, showing thereby deference to Peter as head of the Church, and disregarding his own merit in having been faithful to Christ on Calvary and Peter's demerit in denying our Lord.

APPLICATION. We must always have great reverence for those in authority. For as such they hold the place of God. Show this by your respectful language, your obedience and your love.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Look upon my lowliness and deliver me, for I have not forgotten thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 153.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how Peter, finding the sepulchre open and empty, stood wondering within himself when all at once our risen Lord appeared to him. Consider here with what feelings of shame and confusion he threw himself at our Lord's feet and with what tears he implored pardon for having denied Him. But Christ most sweetly consoled him, and bade him confirm his brethren in the belief of the resurrection.

APPLICATION. Among the Apostles Peter was the first to see Christ risen and Magdalene the first among the holy women, penitents both. Whence sinners may understand that when, because of sin committed, they resolve to serve God with more humility and fervour, they may hope to be even more favoured by God than those who have always remained innocent. On the contrary, the latter may remain far behind the penitent sinners, when they only advance but languidly in the road of perfection and in the pursuit of virtue.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity.* (Ps. l, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that when St. Peter made known to the Apostles the appearance of Christ to himself, they believed at once with undoubting faith what they had at first regarded as the idle tales of the women. *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.* Thus was evidenced from the very first, even before St. Peter had been constituted by our Blessed Lord head of the Church, the authority attached to his word and the esteem in which he was held.

APPLICATION. The same readiness to submit to the teaching of the vicar of Christ and the successor of St. Peter in matters of faith and morals, the good and faithful children of the Church have always professed and constantly practised. Thank God for the great gift of an infallible Pope, the vicar of Christ upon earth. Pray often for the Holy Father and for the Church.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord preserve him and give him life and make him blessed upon the earth.* (Ps. xl, 3.)

THURSDAY AFTER EASTER SUNDAY
ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory? (Luke xxiv, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the imperfection of these two disciples who being deeply afflicted at the death of Christ sought solace from insensible things, in order to assuage the sadness of their souls which in God alone can find comfort. But more imperfect still was their faith, despairing as they did of the long expected redemption, because they had beheld Jesus dead upon the cross. Yet, notwithstanding, our Blessed Lord joined their company in the guise of a traveller,

because at least they had Him in their hearts by their affection and on their lips as they spoke of His merits and of His sacred passion.

Application. In the same way as Christ is in the midst of those who hold holy and spiritual conversation : *There am I in the midst of them* (Matt. xviii, 20), so too is the evil spirit to be found amongst those who lose their time in useless and idle discourses, in murmurs and criticisms of their neighbour.

Affections and resolutions. *My lips shall praise thee ; thus will I bless thee all my life long.* (Ps. lxii, 4.)

Consider secondly that our Lord lovingly asked of them what it was they conversed about, so that He might enlighten them and correct their lack of faith. Christ had come on earth, as they thought, to liberate His people from the slavery of the Romans and enrich them with temporal goods, not to deliver them from the yoke of sin and render them worthy of possessing eternal goods through the merits of His death. It was for this error that Jesus upbraided them : *O foolish, and slow of heart to believe !* An error common to the greater part of mankind. They seek to enjoy the goods and to avoid the evils of the present life, whilst they care not to merit eternal riches and escape the evils of the future. Hence it is that they make little or no account of the cross and passion of Christ, by which He won for us eternal goods and delivered us from everlasting evils.

Application. If you keep your mind fixed upon the future and upon eternity you will assuredly make more account of the cross of Christ. Animate yourself then to embrace it and to suffer with Christ in this life !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I had in my mind the eternal years.* (Ps. lxxvi, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that when Christ made, as it were, to continue His journey the two disciples constrained Him to stay and to eat with them. At table too they served Him, and in this act of charity and in the magnificent reward He bestowed upon them in the breaking of bread they were enlightened to recognise the person of Christ in their divine guest. Behold here the way of being spiritually enlightened and of being favoured by our Lord, namely to exercise acts of virtue, and particularly that of charity.

APPLICATION. To your lot it has not fallen to serve and administer food to the person of Christ. Remember however that what you do to your neighbour for the love of Christ, He recognises and remunerates as if done to Himself. Moreover in giving you His sacred body in the blessed sacrament, He will abundantly illuminate and feed your soul, as He did to those two disciples, who *knew him in the breaking of bread.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Open thou mine eyes and I shall see the wondrous things of thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 18.)

FRIDAY AFTER EASTER SUNDAY
APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES ON EASTER DAY

When it was late that same day . . . Jesus came and stood in the midst. (John xx, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Apostles were troubled on account of the death of Christ, and for fear of the Jews remained together in the cenacle. Our risen Lord therefore did not appear to them until a

late hour that same evening, wishing that they should first receive many tidings of His resurrection and thus be better disposed to believe in so great a mystery. Such is the way usually followed by divine providence. God defers to grant graces that so we may the better prepare ourselves to receive them.

APPLICATION. You frequently grieve at not obtaining immediately from God that favour which you desire. But in this you err. This delay is rather a fresh grace for your soul, for which you ought to be thankful to God. For thus He lets you see that you are not yet sufficiently disposed to receive it, and so gives you the opportunity of preparing yourself to receive it more abundantly. You must remove the impediments of disorderly affections, and practise still longer the virtues of faith, humility and perseverance in asking, all of which oftentimes mean for you a greater good than what you desire.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With expectation I waited for the Lord, and he was attentive unto me.* (Ps. xxxix, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that our Lord entered of a sudden into the cenacle, the doors being shut, and setting Himself in the midst of the Apostles, announced peace to them and courage against all fear : *Peace be to you, it is I ; fear not.* Behold here the manner in which Christ enters triumphantly into the soul. He enters not into the soul of one who has the doors of the senses interior and exterior wide open, giving admission to every object, to every thought, to every earthly and worldly affection. Christ enters into the heart that is kept well guarded and detached from creatures in order thereby to give entrance to its God, its Creator and Redeemer. In

the midst of such a heart He loves to remain as the centre of all its thoughts and affections, as the end of all its operations and life. He gives it to enjoy true peace of soul and security from every hostile assault.

APPLICATION. Study then how to watch over the doors of your exterior senses and the powers of your soul, if you desire that Jesus should come into your heart and bring with Him true peace for your soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *His place is in peace, and his abode in Sion.* (Ps. lxxv, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the Apostles were troubled and terrified at the sudden appearance of Jesus risen, fearing that it was some apparition. Our Lord, however, in order to tranquillise their minds and assure them of His resurrection, showed them the wounds which He still retained in His sacred hands and feet. Thus did He prove to them the truth of the resurrection, and that it was His own real body, and so remove from their hearts all their doubts and all their fears.

APPLICATION. What an excellent means this to tranquillise also your troubled heart, and brighten your dark and cloudy mind, to run to the feet of Jesus. There contemplate those wounds, which He sustained upon the cross for your redemption, and which He now retains in His glorified body that in them you may find refuge. These are those fountains of life ever open for your benefit, wherein you may find light, consolation, and strength in all your needs.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bless ye God, the Lord from the fountains of Israel.* (Ps. lxvii, 27.)

SATURDAY AFTER EASTER SUNDAY
ON THE LAKE OF TIBERIAS

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. (John xxi, 1.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Apostles at the invitation of St. Peter go forth to fish, showing thereby that union so highly commended by their Lord and so praiseworthy everywhere, and at all times. All the night they cast their nets but their labour was unavailing. *That night they caught nothing.* But how far worse employed are the labours of so many who continue the whole night of their life fishing for an honour, a position, for the merest whim ! When passing forth from the sea of this life how they will then see that they have laboured all for nothing. Then will be verified in them that saying of the prophet : *And the labours of the people shall come to nothing, and of the nations shall go to the fire* (Jer. li, 58), that is *to nothing* in regard to merit lost for an eternity, *to the fire* in regard to the punishment which remains to be paid by fire.

APPLICATION. Reflect on what you have done up to the present merely to satisfy your own inclinations without thereby gaining any merit or any fruit. And thus you will be able to say with the Prophet : *I am the man that see my poverty.* (Lam. iii, 1.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Direct my way in thy sight.* (Ps. v, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ our Lord appearing in a strange apparel to the Apostles on the sea shore where they were fishing, inquired if they had any fish. When they answered : *No*, He commanded them to cast their nets on the right side, and there

they took an abundant draught of fish. By this our Lord would signify to the Apostles the great conquest of souls, which they would achieve on being sent by Him to preach His name and the word of His gospel.

APPLICATION. In like manner would He teach us what treasures of merit he acquires, who with a right intention and for the love of God employs himself and labours faithfully in the duties of his state of life. Happy then will be your lot if you always serve God with a pure intention and not for human motives nor in order to carry out your own will.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wait on the Lord and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to see the land.* (Ps. xxvi, 34.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that upon this miraculous draught of fish, St. John forthwith recognised that it was our Blessed Lord Himself Who had bade them cast their nets on the right side, and St. Peter hastened to cast himself into the sea to go to prostrate himself at the feet of Jesus. Observe here that as it is proper to the innocent, who are represented by St. John, to receive more abundantly spiritual lights and celestial favours from God as he did, so in a like manner it is characteristic of true penitents to give themselves generously like St. Peter to the fatigues of penance. Thus they may render themselves worthy to find again our Blessed Lord and unite themselves to Him so as never again to be separated from Him.

APPLICATION. Have you also perhaps gone far away from Jesus Christ in order to satisfy your disorderly inclinations ? Then is it necessary for you too to do violence to yourself and vanquish the difficulties which you encounter, so that you may again come back to our Blessed Lord and find Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and he will save the humble of spirit.* (Ps. xxxiii, 19.)

LOW SUNDAY

CHRIST'S WORDS TO ST. THOMAS

(Read John xx, 19–31.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Thomas either by chance or through some negligence was not in the cenaculum when our Lord appeared for the first time to the Apostles, and on account of this separation from the others was deprived of the consolation of seeing the Master. Neither afterwards could he be induced to believe in the mystery of the resurrection, although it had been attested by all with one accord. He remained still obstinate, nor would he believe unless he saw Christ risen with his own eyes and touched Him with his own hands. How much harm did not this separation from the other Apostles bring to this Apostle!

APPLICATION. Strive always to be united with your fellow-workers in their labours for God and for souls. Let your conduct be ever simple, humble and edifying. Avoid discord and selfish ways.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Light is risen to the just, and gladness to such as are right of heart.* (Ps. xcvi, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the extreme goodness of the divine Master Who wished to appear to Thomas in the presence of all the other Apostles, so that they might be as much edified by his repentance as they had been scandalised by his bad example. Jesus did not upbraid him nor reprove him with sharp words, but most tenderly corrected him: *Be not faithless, but*

believing. With excessive condescension He invites him not only to look at His wounds but to touch them, even as he had wished, in order to convince himself of His resurrection.

APPLICATION. Hardness of heart is softened more easily by the heat of love than by the coldness of severity, and more souls are gained by affability than by harshness. This is the true manner which you must use with your neighbour.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How sweet are thy words to my palate; more than honey to my mouth.* (Ps. cxviii, 103.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how fully Thomas repented and amended his error: *My Lord and my God*, confessing Him to be at the same time both God and Man, Man by acknowledging the Sacred Humanity in which He died, and God by the divinity which raised Him to life again. We do not know whether Thomas really touched the wounds and put his hand into the sacred side as he had been invited to do by Christ. But what is certain is, that the wound of the sacred side inflamed the breast of the Apostle with love and zeal for the divine honour, the wounds of the sacred hands armed him to fight even to the shedding of his blood for His Master's glory, and those of the sacred feet gave him strength to travel even to the far ends of the East for the salvation of souls.

APPLICATION. Do you likewise approach to those wounds which your Redeemer keeps open for you, because they will be for you fountains of light, strength and salvation.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have run in the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 32.)

MONDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY
HUMAN LIFE

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting. (John vi, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that there is nothing more unstable than a little vapour which disappears at the least breath of wind! Such also is human life, as St. James tells us: *For what is your life? It is a vapour.* (James iv, 15.) How many accidents are capable of taking it from you even when you least think? The slightest blow on a vital part, a little cold, a poison-bearing little insect.

APPLICATION. How then can you repute yourself as little less than immortal in this life? *Thou hast not laid these things to heart, neither hast thou remembered thy latter end.* (Isaias xlvii, 7.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My days are vanished like smoke: and my bones are grown dry like fuel for the fire.* (Ps. ci, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that vapour borne on high assumes at times a beautiful form, brilliant even as the sun itself. But how long does this last? *It appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away.* (James, ib.) By its own virtue it is not capable of sustaining itself; it immediately falls and dissolves into nothing. Do not then forget your own nothingness, if at present you find yourself holding an exalted position either of great learning or of rank or of command over others.

APPLICATION. *They are lifted up for a little while and shall not stand.* (Job xxiv, 24.) To-day they are seen in figure and form; to-morrow in the tomb To-day loved, esteemed and venerated by all; to-

morrow under the earth and become the food of worms ! Oh what an almost complete annihilation is that which every moment hangs over you ! How many great captains have there been in the world, how many great princes, what a number of potentates, who are now no more than a mere memory ! Of you then and of your talents what will remain ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All our days are spent ; and in thy wrath we have fainted away.* (Ps. lxxxix, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, what infatuation then is yours if you weary yourself so much for a life so worthless, and attend so little to the future and to an eternal life. Imagine to yourself that there were two classes of persons in the world. Some who like ourselves would die after a few years and others who would never die. Oh how would these latter scorn the folly of the former, if they saw them fatiguing themselves for the acquisition of earthly things ! They would say : Leave these things to us who are immortal upon this earth ; do you prepare yourselves for death and content yourselves rather with what will suffice to sustain this short life of yours.

APPLICATION. In truth, we are not less worthy of being scorned now, although we seek to compassionate each other in this universal folly.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who is the man that desireth life, who loveth to see good days ?* (Ps. xxxiii, 13.)

TUESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

GOOD CONVERSATION

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Matt. xii, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that on hearing the strokes of a clock one may know immediately if it is right or otherwise. So in like manner it suffices to hear but few words spoken by a man in order to judge whether his interior be well ordered or not. *Even thy speech doth discover thee.* Therefore does the Apostle St. Paul with good reason say to each of the faithful : *Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth.* (Ephes. iv, 29.) He who breaks forth into impatient and arrogant words or into injurious language has clearly but little command over his own self.

APPLICATION. Reflect on your faults of the tongue and that you may correct them with the necessary prudence, *make doors and bars to thy mouth.* (Ecclus. xxviii, 28.) If doors have no locks it is a sign there is no guard kept there. Keep secure the key of your mouth so that words may not find their way out without your permission.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; and a door round about my lips.* (Ps. cxl, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that as you must keep a guard over your mouth so that words unworthy of your Christian profession may not come forth, in a similar manner you should open it in seasonable time for the edification of your hearers by good and holy conversation.

APPLICATION. How then comes it to pass that you are ashamed to use the language of that country which ultimately you hope to be yours ? Should it not

rather be a frequent subject of your conversation ? Perhaps you fear vain-glory by being accounted a too spiritual man ? Have certainly the intention of avoiding all vanity, but strive only to benefit your neighbour, *to the edification of faith that it may administer grace to the hearers.* (Eph. iv, 29.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, thou wilt open my lips : and my mouth shall declare thy praise.* (Ps. l, 17).

CONSIDER THIRDLY the advantages which you will produce by your good and holy conversations. The good which they bring to all manner of persons, be they religious or lay, or even those who are leading indifferent lives, is exceeding great. For these familiar conversations frequently penetrate the heart more intimately even than sermons, producing the grace of compunction in the guilty, the grace of fortitude in the good and in the perfect the grace of a still higher worship of God.

APPLICATION. Be therefore given as much as you can to these good conversations according as your state of life and occasions permit, because by benefiting others, you will procure even more advantage for yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will bless the Lord at all times ; his praise shall be always in my mouth.* (Ps. xxxiii, 2.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

MERIT OF SUFFERINGS

Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you. (Matt. v, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what is that price by which you must buy unto yourself the glory of paradise. Nothing else than the sufferings of this life. *The*

sufferings of this time, as St. Paul calls them (Rom. viii, 18), are: Sickness, poverty, humiliations, persecution and other such inconveniences which are incident to the lives of all. When you disdain to accept these tribulations, you refuse that means which God gives to you as to a poor man, in order that you may be enabled to make a great purchase. Would not people be seen running eagerly to a place where a prince was casting money among the crowd on the occasion of some great feast?

APPLICATION. And will you not take even a step to gather profit from such and such a tribulation, which God offers you in order to make you rich?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have been delighted in the way of thy testimonies, as in all riches.* (Ps. cxviii, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the sufferings which you endure for God may be considered as so much money wherewith to purchase paradise for yourself; but they are out of all proportion to such a purchase, because in themselves they do not possess a worth so immense. For what proportion could there possibly be between your sufferings and the glory of heaven? If there were no other difference there is at least this, that your sufferings are all connected with the time of this life, *The sufferings of this time:* whilst future glory is essentially one with eternity.

APPLICATION. Ponder well then and oftentimes what proportion there can be between time and eternity? *Momentary and light*, as St. Paul tells us, *is the tribulation that worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of thy glory.* (2 Cor. iv, 17.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Call upon me in*

the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. (Ps. xlix, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it seems to you hard to suffer because the future happiness of heaven is hidden from you. But do not fear. Very soon it will be made manifest to you : *the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.* (Rom. viii, 18.) Oh if our Lord would only raise that veil a little which conceals it from your view and give you to contemplate even one single ray of that heavenly bliss, how happy would you be ! You could not then refrain from crying out : The happiness which I expect is so great, that every suffering is for me both welcome and delightful.

APPLICATION. It must needs be that you now pass through the time of this earthly pilgrimage before this glory which is future and eternal is revealed in you. Therefore at present be content that it be revealed to you in *hope* and not in *reality* : since by suffering and labouring to acquire this future glory, which you hope to attain, through faith, you will render yourself deserving of a greater reward.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Many are the afflictions of the just ; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them.* (Ps. xxxiii, 20.)

THURSDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY
MUTUAL CHARITY

A new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you. (John xiii, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that one of the most necessary precepts is the mutual bearing with one another. And yet perhaps this is the one which is least realised, because in order to carry burdens which at times are

heavy it is necessary to possess much fortitude, and the greater number of persons are spiritually weak.

APPLICATION. If then you would know to what degree of fortitude you have arrived, observe how far you are able to bear the burdens of others. If you can support them, you are strong and robust; but if, on the contrary, you cannot do so, then are you weak and lose immense merit and gain.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Acceptable is the man who is merciful and lendeth.* (Ps. cxi, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what are these burdens of others which we must carry. Firstly, they are the natural and moral defects of our neighbour, such as infirmity, melancholy, rudeness, ingratitude, anger, contradictions, all heavy burdens to bear. Secondly there are the spiritual and corporal necessities of your neighbour, assisting him as far as you can in the wants of the body and much more so in the needs of the soul, counselling him in doubt, comforting him in temptation and consoling him in affliction. In the third place, you have also to share part of the punishment due to his sins, by praying for him, doing penance for him.

APPLICATION. The principal burden which you must necessarily bear is that of natural and moral defects. If you will but reflect on what others have to suffer from your own defects, you will more easily be indulgent to them, you will gather strength to support in turn their shortcomings also.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* (Ps. cxxxii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that to bear mutually with one another is to fulfil the law of Christ, because it is

founded on that charity which Christ had in our regard. He had compassion on our defects, coming to our aid in our necessities and expiating the punishment due to our sins. This is a law which binds all, but how few there are who observe it, because few are the souls who are generous and courageous in supporting the defects of their neighbours.

APPLICATION. On your part then strive all you can to repair this fault and by so doing you will become more pleasing to Jesus Christ. On the other hand, if you retaliate when you are contradicted by others or when you hear their angry words, there will perish the great law of charity which Christ has so specially made His own.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Or who shall rest in thy holy hill? He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue, nor hath done evil to his neighbour.* (Ps. xiv, 1–3.)

FRIDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

LABOUR AND ITS REWARD

Then will he render to every man according to his works (Matt. xvi, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that for such a great and eternal reward as that which God is making ready for you in heaven, it would be but just that it should be preceded by labour that was immense and almost eternal; and, if that were not possible, at least that it should be preceded by great endeavours which should last for many years. On the contrary observe how short the term is, especially when at the most, as the Psalmist says, *The days of our years are threescore and ten* (Ps. lxxxix, 10), and seldom more.

APPLICATION. Will you not then be content to undergo some labour even for so brief a space of time that you may enjoy an eternity of happiness hereafter? God in His mercy will even shorten the life of man so that souls if they are not saved will have less reason to complain. How is it then that you are not willing to suffer any labour even to the last breath of your life for so unspeakable a reward?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor, and in labours from my youth; and being exalted have been humbled and troubled.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that some are so far from being willing to undergo any such fatigue until death in order to purchase heaven, that it seems to them that they already do too much, and they are almost ashamed to use ordinary care in fully satisfying the obligations of their state of life. Does not this very fact show that they hold such a kingdom, and an eternal kingdom too, in but low estimation? Nevertheless such is the folly of many that they travel to far distant lands, and expose their lives in battle and to a thousand perils for a reward either of empty smoke or of a trifling gain.

APPLICATION. For the recompense which our Lord has promised you, namely the eternal possession of all His goods, can you be afraid or ashamed to employ too much care and trouble in order to attain it?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house: holy is thy temple.* (Ps. lxiv, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what Ecclesiasticus says to you, *Be not afraid to be justified even to death.* (Ecclus. xviii, 22.) Therefore you ought not to fail to continue living until the moment of your death as if each day were the first on which you began to serve God. How-

ever, many there are who in the progress of time fall off from that diligence and fervour which they gave proof of as beginners in God's service, as if they considered that now they had done sufficient.

APPLICATION. If you indeed find yourself drawing near the end of your life's pilgrimage, and none of us can say he is not, so much the more reason have you to animate yourself with that fervour with which you started at the beginning. Reflect a little and see how much room there still is for amendment. So many imperfections yet remain to be corrected that you should account yourself not only a beginner, but even a sinner. Therefore it behoves you to believe that it is the present hour in which you must begin to serve God in right earnest: *Be not afraid to be justified even to death.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I said: Now have I begun, this is the change of the right hand of the most high.* (Ps. lxxvi, 11.)

SATURDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY

HOW TO MAKE PROGRESS IN VIRTUE

Behold, I am with you all days. (Matt. xxviii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that if by your own efforts you were obliged to work out that progress in virtue which is suitable to your state in life, you would have much reason for discouragement, because of yourself you can do nothing. You must found your hopes on the assistance of God. He who has with him the help of his Lord can be confident of reaching even a high degree of Christian perfection. The essential point is that you on your part dispose yourself to receive this divine help. For this however two conditions are necessary: the first, that you have a full and intimate

knowledge of your own weakness by which of yourself you cannot advance the least step in virtue ; the second that you frequently and ardently beg of our Lord that He would vouchsafe to grant you His assistance so necessary for you.

APPLICATION. Up to the present moment you seem to have received but little help from God, because you have not been solicitous in fulfilling these two conditions. Begin now, and you will experience much profit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am needy and poor : O God, help me.* (Ps. lxix, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you cannot attain to Christian perfection as quickly as at first you might imagine, but only step by step. Our Lord wills that you climb, not that you should fly. This is the principal reason why so few become really holy, because they would at once find themselves with St. Paul raised to the third heavens. Our Lord does not wish to do all Himself, but He wills that we of ourselves ascend. For thus it is that we merit all the more by the violence we do ourselves, little by little conquering ourselves, just as is done in ascending a high mountain.

APPLICATION. Strive then to do that which specially concerns yourself. Begin by exercising yourself more particularly in those virtues of which you have most need. Take first one step and then another, because it is by climbing that you must make the ascent.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the man whose help is from thee, In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that climbing in this manner to the heights of Christian perfection necessarily requires

much labour and suffering. Do not however lose courage, because your joy hereafter will be in proportion to the suffering and your reward to the labour. Even in this life, this valley of tears, you will also enjoy a foretaste of the happiness which awaits you, and for your final reward you will possess the Kingdom of Heaven. Above all act not like those who are inconstant in the practice of virtue which they have undertaken, ever discontented in the state of life in which God has placed them. You are bound to be always climbing towards that which is better, working *in the place which he hath set*, as the Psalmist says, that is, in the state of life and in the work to which our Lord has called you.

APPLICATION. Hence it is essential that you be courageous. Recall to mind frequently that two conditions are necessary in order that you may arrive at that degree of perfection which God desires of you, namely the grace of God, and your own co-operation with that same grace. However you must place all your confidence not in this latter but altogether in the grace which God is pleased to grant you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my light and my salvation: Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: Of whom shall I be afraid?* (Ps. xxvi, 1.)

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
THE GOOD SHEPHERD

(Read John x, 11–16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the cares of a good shepherd are threefold, namely to guide, to feed and to defend his sheep. Now all these cares Jesus, your true Shepherd, has manifested in your regard. Firstly, He

is your guide through the desert places of this world, so that you may not stray from the safe path which leads to the fold of eternal repose: *I will lead thee by the paths of equity.* (Prov. iv, 11.) The good shepherd, in order the better to guide his sheep, goes before them and so draws them after him. Christ also by His most holy example teaches you the true path of virtue.

APPLICATION. Set yourself therefore to study the life of Christ and in every occurrence you will find an example of that virtue which you ought to imitate, be it humility, patience, charity, meekness or any other. What a sublime manner of life is that for you, namely to conform your whole life to the example of Jesus! The sheep which faithfully follows in the footsteps of its shepherd never strays from the right path.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes are ever towards the Lord: for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare.* (Ps. xxiv, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that your good shepherd Jesus is not only your guide, but He moreover feeds and nourishes you with heavenly doctrine, the vivifying streams of grace, with spiritual consolations and much more with the blessed sacrament of the altar. Where else can you find a shepherd so bountiful as to nourish his sheep with his own flesh and blood?

APPLICATION. And does not all this suffice to enable you to recognise the infinite goodness of your shepherd Jesus, and generously to reject all other nourishment, satisfied and satiated with that alone which our Lord has given you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: he hath given food to them that fear him.* (Ps. cx, 4, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus as your good shepherd defends you far more effectually than any shepherd is wont to protect his sheep. Each one of Christ's flock is assailed by three powerful enemies: by the devil as a voracious wolf, by the deceitful and mercenary world, and by the stealthy thief of self-love. From the assaults of each of these Jesus defends the sheep of His fold. Already in our defence He has once most generously encountered death. And now He combats in each one of His sheep, giving them strength to overcome so that they may have the merit of being crowned triumphantly.

APPLICATION. Strive then to be one of the faithful sheep of the fold of Christ. Follow the footsteps of His example, by nourishing yourself with that food which He has so lavishly prepared for you. Thus protected by so good a shepherd, you will have nothing to fear; neither the violence nor the snares of your enemies: *If God be for us, who is against us?* (Rom. viii, 31.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We thy people, and the sheep of thy pasture, will give thanks to thee for ever. We shall shew forth thy praise, unto generation and generation.* (Ps. lxxviii, 13.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

HAPPINESS

I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures. (John x, 9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that all men are in quest of the abode of happiness, but few are those who know how to find it. Many wise and ancient philosophers

set themselves up as teachers and guides to happiness, but all to no purpose, because they understood not how to find the entrance leading thereto. The true and only door is Christ, Whom they either did not believe in or did not know. *I am the door.* He is the only one Who can come to your help by delivering you from supreme and eternal misery and enable you to enjoy eternal and supreme happiness.

APPLICATION. Blessed then are you, if you shall have rendered yourself worthy to enter by this door! Thank God with all your heart that without any merit on your part, He has allowed you to be born at a time of so much light, when with the utmost ease it is possible for you to find this door which is unknown to so many. *Behold I have given before thee a door opened.* (Apoc. iii, 8.) If you do not enter, it will be your own fault and to your own ruin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *This is the gate of the Lord; the just shall enter into it.* (Ps. cxvii, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that besides the perfect happiness of heaven, there is an imperfect happiness which can be enjoyed on this earth. Of this likewise is Christ the door, because none there are in this world who can experience delights similar to those which the true followers of Christ enjoy. They are rather the delights of angels, which man enjoys according to what he has in common with the angels: *By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in and go out and shall find pastures.* What blessed pastures then does he not find who never separates himself from Jesus Christ! *Blessed is the man that watcheth at the posts of my doors.* (Prov. viii, 34.) Jesus is the door that leads to heaven and blessed is he who not being yet able to enter within, stands at least at the door.

APPLICATION. Meantime take up your stand at the feet of Jesus crucified, and here *go in and go out.* Go in by looking upon Him as your God. Go out by considering Him made man for you and your redeemer, contemplating His goodness, His mercy, His sufferings and death endured on the cross for your sake. In this way will you in some manner imitate that which the blessed do in heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bring out the sword, and shut up the way against them that persecute me. Say to my soul : I am thy salvation.* (Ps. xxxiv, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the blessed exult in the pastures of heaven in the same measure as they sought after them whilst on earth by self-denial, obedience, humility, penance and by similar practices of virtue taught them by Jesus Christ. In order then that we may be happy here on earth, as far as it is possible to realise happiness in this life, it is necessary that by similar practices of virtue we seek these pastures near to our crucified Lord.

APPLICATION. The more then that you make use of such exercises of virtue and of mortification as were practised by the saints on earth, so much the more abundantly will you now be refreshed by the food which Jesus gives to those still on the way. Hereafter too in heaven you will enjoy still more abundantly that food which is proper to the blessed there.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.* (Ps. xxii, 2.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CUSTODY OF THE EYES

If thy eye scandalise thee pluck it out, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. (Matt. xviii, 9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that long before our Blessed Lord had uttered these solemn words, the holy man Job even in the ancient dispensation had made a covenant with his eyes to refrain them, as he says, from any unguarded look, lest God should have no part with him, or he no inheritance from God. But why did he speak of it as a covenant and not rather as a peace? To give us to understand that our eyes though so dear to us are in reality our chiefest enemies, and with enemies one may make a covenant, but not a peace.

APPLICATION. Neither then must you trust these enemies nor ever lay aside your weapons of defence, because they are traitors that can lead your soul into a miserable slavery. And ought you not also, more even than so holy a man, to fear for your own self, so miserable and so weak?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity: quicken me in thy way.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the reason a covenant is to be made with our eyes is because they are the channels which usually introduce thoughts into the mind. When the mind deliberately reflects upon things it is said that it sees them. On the other hand when the eyes gaze upon objects it is said that they think of

them, as the Psalmist also says: *But thou shalt consider with thy eyes.* (Ps. xc, 8.) And it is precisely these looks that may bring harm to the soul.

APPLICATION. Reflect then how you act when you happen to encounter dangerous objects. Do you allow freedom to your eyes or do you quietly turn them away? If you act carelessly, you may do yourself a grievous injury.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee have I lifted up my eyes: who dwellest in the heaven.* (Ps. cxxii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the great harm which such looks can cause you. You may well fear with holy Job that God will have no further part in you. For to such unguarded looks succeed thoughts which will steal your mind from God, complacency in them follows which draws away from Him your heart; finally, consent is given which robs Him of your will. And so it comes to pass that God, your lord and master, can no longer have any part in you.

APPLICATION. Observe then how necessary it is for you to be on your guard against enemies so dangerous. Do not permit them any hostile act, so that you may not have to lament in the words of the Prophet: *My eye hath wasted my soul.* (Lam. iii, 51.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes.* (Ps. xiii, 3.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE PRAISE OF MEN

Be not as the hypocrites that love to pray that they may be seen by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. (Matt. vi, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what all the good that comes to you from the praise of men really signifies. They may call you fortunate and blessed, but they cannot make you so. In reality you are what you appear in the sight of God and nothing more. If before God you are but poor, miserable and worthless, what can it profit you that the world should judge of you differently ?

APPLICATION. Oh how great then is your folly, that runs so blindly after praise, that seeks after vanities ! Let every one praise you to your heart's content, because *they cannot add to your stature* I do not say *one cubit* (Luke xii, 25) but not even a single inch.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The wicked have not set thee before their eyes.* (Ps. lxxxv, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the praise of men not only does not bring you any profit, but causes you great harm in that it deprives you of a true knowledge of yourself. It deceives you in making you believe that you are what in reality you are not, by hiding from you your defects, by minimising or falsifying them, and by even going so far as to extol in you as a virtue that which should be censured as a fault or a vice.

APPLICATION. And yet notwithstanding, is it not true that you love and run after that which so shamefully betrays you ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Understand, ye unwise among the people, and ye fools be wise at last.* (Ps. xciii, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that he who praises you by taking from you a true knowledge of yourself and of your own defects, does you another great injury, namely, that of making you stray away from the right path, which is that of humility. This is the road by which Jesus walked and those also who following in His footsteps became most dear to God. This is the road you also must tread, if you wish to reach the same end. Now he who praises you takes you from it. For he makes you conceive an exalted opinion of your own self and so despise your neighbour. He makes you resent every little contradiction and not submit promptly to those who are placed over you. He makes you aspire to the most honourable positions. In a word, he makes you become proud.

APPLICATION. Therefore renounce resolutely all claim to praise and never do anything in the least in order to procure it. If at times it follow you, reject it, and especially the false reasonings which it suggests to your mind. Above all accustom yourself to seek only in all your actions the approbation of God Who alone can make you truly happy.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.* (Ps. cxvii, 6.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

SEEKING LIGHT FROM GOD

The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things. (John xiv, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the wisdom which you have most need of consists in knowing how to regulate yourself well as to your state of life, your work, and

your responsibilities. Doubt not therefore that you will obtain this grace from God if you will but ask Him for it. *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it shall be given him.* (James i, 5.) It is by God alone that we may hope to be illuminated, because He *giveth to all men abundantly*, provided He be supplicated. *But as we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee.* (2 Paral. xx, 12.)

APPLICATION. In your difficulties and doubts are you always careful? Do you even always remember to have recourse to God in order that you may be illuminated and guided?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast delivered my soul from death: my feet from falling: that I may please in the sight of God, in the light of the living.* (Ps. lv, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in order the more surely to obtain such wisdom you must ask for it earnestly and perseveringly. Earnestly, because of your trust in the promises which God has many times confirmed in holy scripture, *Let him ask in faith*; perseveringly, that is not ceasing to ask until you see that your prayer is answered: *Nothing wavering.*

APPLICATION. Believe then most firmly that you will not fail to obtain, if you do not leave off praying. You have not to trust in the strength of your petitions which are so deficient and poor but in the virtue of the divine word, a word more potent than that of any king.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *There is no one in death that is mindful of thee. . . . I have laboured in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears.* (Ps. vi, 6–7.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that want of perseverance in

asking proceeds ordinarily from a want of confidence, and from wavering in the hope of obtaining our petition. For this reason St. James says: *He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind.* (James i, 6.) For a little while you ask and then you leave off. He who asks in this manner is sure to obtain nothing. For God wills that our trust in Him be lasting. He will have us continue to petition without ceasing, even when He seems not to hear us, and defers granting us favours and graces, so that He may prove whether we trust in Him as much as we ought.

APPLICATION. What great merit would your prayer have if at your first request your petition was granted at once? You would certainly ask, *nothing wavering*, but you would be wanting in faith. The merit consists in seeing your petition seemingly repulsed and then repeating it as did the woman of Canaan who in the end deserved to hear: *O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt.* (Matt. xv, 28.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O God, hear my prayer: give ear to the words of my mouth.* (Ps. liii, 4.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. (John xiii, 35.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the distinctive mark by which our Blessed Lord wished that His disciples should be known. It was not by miracles, nor by learning nor by any of those other prerogatives by which they might be endowed, but merely by love for one another. It is essential then that this mutual love be greater than

that which is ordinarily found among those who are not followers of Christ. For He wishes that it be a characteristic sufficient of itself to make them universally known by all as being His disciples.

APPLICATION. Does it appear to you then that such is your charity, and that besides your other virtues you possess this distinctive mark by which you may be known to be a follower of Christ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Or who shall rest in thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice . . Nor hath done evil to his neighbour: nor taken up a reproach against his neighbour.* (Ps. xiv, 1–3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that our Blessed Lord had His desire perfectly fulfilled among the early Christians. Hence it came about that the heathen conversing among themselves frequently said of the Christians: *See how they love one another.* They were all one in spirit by unity of faith, and one in will by unity of desires and deeds: *One heart and one mind.* (Acts iv, 32.) They practised too such heroic acts of charity not only among themselves but likewise towards their persecutors, that no other body of men could glory in similar acts. Now however among the faithful this charity has to a great extent grown cool, the powers of hell doing all they can to destroy it. Most necessary therefore is it that we should strive to fire our souls with this spirit of charity, and be ready to practise it when occasions arise.

APPLICATION. Examine yourself somewhat and see how far you have a care to maintain in your own household and with others *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Eph. iv, 3.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For the sake of my*

brethren, and of my neighbours I spoke peace of thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I have sought good things for thee. (Ps. cxxi, 8, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what is the reason why this mutual love so insisted upon by Jesus Christ is not better practised. It is because we do not love Him as we should. The same happens with us as with the lines in a circle. The more closely they approach their centre, the more they are united to each other; whilst the farther removed they are from it, the more divided are they from one another. Did we but remain united to Jesus, seeking only to please Him in all our actions, and to give glory to Him alone, we should be in like manner united among ourselves. But because we love Jesus so little, it is no wonder that there is so little love of one another.

APPLICATION. Seek then to acquire an ardent love for Jesus, because by this means you will come to love your neighbour for the love of Him. This is what He most desires from you as the truest mark of your love for Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. My God is my helper: in him will I put my trust.* (Ps. xvii, 2–3.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

NEED OF GOD'S GRACE

I am the vine, you the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. (John xv, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ calls Himself the vine and us the branches, in order that we may understand the need we have of Him even as the branch

depends upon the vine. Now there are three kinds of branches. Some there are that are quite cut off from the vine; others again united to it but quite dead, and others in the full vigour of life. So in like manner it is amongst men. The branches which are cut off are the heretics and infidels fit only for the flames. The dead dry branches, united indeed to Christ, are those who adhere to Him by faith but not by sanctifying grace, and such as these draw not the sap which produces fruit. The living branches are those who adhere to Christ both by faith and charity, and so receive in themselves the virtue to produce fruits unto eternal life.

APPLICATION. See therefore the supreme necessity which you have of remaining closely united to Christ, so that you may not be as a dry branch but be able to bear much fruit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn again, O God of hosts. Look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard.* (Ps. lxxix, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the branch not only has from the vine the power of producing fruit, but moreover also draws from the same source even the act of producing it. For the vine concurs with the branch by its vigour and action in the effect. So in like manner, Christ not only gives us the power of bringing forth fruit unto eternal life, but He Himself concurs with us in so doing, because without Him we can do nothing: *Without me you can do nothing.*

APPLICATION. O how thoroughly should you humble yourself at the thought of your own nothingness, and how annihilate yourself as it were in the presence of God with a longing desire to remain closely united to Him. Pray that it may be given you fully

to comprehend this truth, that you cannot perform any good action, even the smallest, if our Lord does not give you the power and concur with you by His help in the action!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.* (Ps. lxxii, 22.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how our Blessed Lord, while giving us the power to act, wishes at the same time that by the same gifts with which He endows us we should merit an everlasting crown, and it is by means of our free will that He will have us act. True it is that even the good use of our free will is also His gift, so neither must we take glory to ourselves in anything, but refer all to Him. When however we fail to make good use of it, the fault is all ours, because it is we who thus convert the good juice of the vine into fruit that is useless or even positively bad.

APPLICATION. Have then these two maxims engraven in your mind. The first is, that all the good you do comes from God Who gives you grace both to will and to act. The second, that when you fail to do good this proceeds from your own self, because by means of your free will you oppose yourself to the action of divine grace. Cease not to pray constantly that God may give you light to recognise that your every good comes from Him: *Without me you can do nothing*, and that you may correspond with the action of divine grace by generously overcoming yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord.* (Ps. xxx, 25.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
A LITTLE LABOUR AND A GREAT REWARD

(Read John xvi, 16–22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus being now on the point of beginning His sacred Passion, said to the Apostles: *A little while and ye shall not see me.* Our Blessed Lord thus calls all that period of His sufferings short, and little all that immense amount of torments which has been compared by the prophets at one time to a sea, at another to an abyss, or to an overwhelming deluge of sufferings: *Waters have flowed over my head.* (Lamen. iii, 54), and *The deep hath closed me round about.* (Jonas ii, 6.) And why did He speak thus? Doubtless to denote that such great sufferings for you seemed but little to the excessive love He had for you. Hence He several times spoke of His passion as a chalice, as if it were nothing more than the smallest draught.

APPLICATION. To you, on the contrary, every little trouble you endure for the sake of Jesus seems to be too great, every little drop appears to you as an ocean, because you have not a true love for our Lord in your heart. True love for Jesus does not consist in tender affections but in sharing His cross and in embracing sufferings with joy—to love and to suffer for the beloved being one and the same thing.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me.* (Ps. lxviii, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus in saying to His Apostles: *A little while and ye shall see Me,* intended to signify not only that brief time of His passion after which they should see Him in His risen life. He

moreover meant to denote the short space of the years of their lives in this world, after which in the happiness of the kingdom of heaven they would see and enjoy Him for ever. It is as if He had said: Do not fear the labours and persecutions that will come upon you after My departure, for the labours will be brief but the repose and the crown eternal.

APPLICATION. How greatly ought you also to take courage from the thought that your labours for God in this world will be brief and momentary, but the reward will be eternal! Mark how quickly the years that you have already passed are flown. Much more quickly however will the few years that remain to you slip by, and at the end of your life you will perceive how short and momentary it has all been.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man is like to vanity; his days pass away as a shadow.* (Ps. cxliii, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if you would fully realise how short and momentary are your labours and sufferings for God in this life, you should compare them with the immense and eternal reward by which you will be recompensed by God in the life to come, and say with the Apostle: *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.* (2 Cor. iv, 17.) The labours of the worldling are long and grievous, the reward uncertain and momentary. Yet how many for such a transitory reward labour long, some at court, others on the battlefield, others again at sea?

APPLICATION. Does then the toil of some few years which you endure in the observances of a true Christian life appear too much to you, although it gain for you a blessed eternity? *They indeed that they may receive*

a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. (1 Cor. ix, 25.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I thought upon the days of old and I had in my mind the eternal years; and I meditated in the night with mine own heart.* (Ps. lxxvi, 6–7.)

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

Be you then also ready, for at what hour you think not, the son of man will come. (Luke xii, 40.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ does not tell you to prepare yourself for death at the last moment. He bids you to be always prepared: *Be you also ready*, The greatest folly then that you can be guilty of is to lose the precious time that God has given you wherein to make this preparation, and to postpone it to the last moment of your life. The only true and real preparation for death consists in leading a good life. That which is made only at the last is little indeed in proportion to an act so important as that of dying well.

APPLICATION. There are two preparations then which you should make, the one remote the other proximate. The remote consists in never doing anything in which you would be sorry to find yourself occupied at the approach of death. The proximate is so to keep your conscience in good order that you remain like the ship laden in the harbour, which awaits only a favourable wind, without any need of further refurnishing or repairs.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord keepeth thee from all evil: may the Lord keep thy soul. May the*

Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out; from henceforth now and for ever. (Ps. cxx, 7–8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you make neither of these preparations because you are always promising yourself further time, and will not listen to Jesus Christ Who tells you plainly that *at what hour you think not the Son of man will come*, that is to say, when you least expect it. He says, *at what hour*, because you cannot be certain of one day, not even of one hour. Do not deceive yourself by imagining that with you at least He will deal differently, because when thus speaking He spoke to all men.

APPLICATION. Be sure therefore that in these words Christ also speaks to you. Say with holy Job: *I know not how long I shall continue and whether after a while my maker may take me away.* (Job xxxii, 22.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God. When shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Ps. xli, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that whilst our Lord warns you that He will come suddenly, He yet shows you at the same time that He does not wish to take you unawares. If you are in such a manner surprised it will be entirely your own fault, because you have not taken the warning to heart, by living in this world in such a manner as if each day were to be your last.

APPLICATION. Make your prayer, your confession and holy communion, celebrate or hear Holy Mass, as if each duty were to be your last. Often recommend to God that last hour of your life. Beseech Him with all your heart that He will then assist you and will defend you from all its perils. If you do this you will live prepared for death, which may come at the hour in which you were not thinking of it, but never in the

hour in which you did not expect it. *Blessed are all they that wait for him.* (Isa. xxx, 18.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my feet from falling; that I may please in the sight of God, in the light of the living.* (Ps. lv, 13.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CARE OF THE BODY

It is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell. (Matt. v, 30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, that the rule by which you are to be guided in governing your body is to treat it as a servant; that is to say, to have a care for it but not too tender a one. *He that nourisheth his servant delicately*, says the Book of Proverbs (xxix, 21) *afterwards shall find him stubborn.* If you nourish it not, it will languish; but if you nourish it delicately it will become perverse. That same care which you bestow upon it must be directed to this end, namely, that it acts as a servant in your regard, that it watch, labour and be employed for the benefit of your soul.

APPLICATION. But how often is your care of your body given for no other reason than merely to gratify its every desire? This is not to make yourself master of it. Show that you are its master, by making your body understand when necessary that it is in fact your servant. If it have to suffer somewhat from hunger, or cold, or heat, let it have patience. Such is the consequence of its fallen state.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be thou, O my soul,*

subject to God; for from him is my patience. (Ps. lxi, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how great the peril is if you treat this servant of yours too tenderly. It will be rebellious, obstinate, whimsical and disobedient to you. What a disgrace it would be for the head of a family, when he gave some command to his servant, to get from him the answer made openly that he would not obey! That same disgrace you may perhaps have to suffer from your body. It will not be rebellious while you actually pamper it. Nay, it will even make you great promises that it will be better able to endure labours for you, and be able to render you much more assistance in the time of prayer and in your long spells of study. Do not however hearken unto it, for *afterwards you will find it stubborn*; when you would have it toil and work, it will refuse you.

APPLICATION. Consequently let not yourself be led by such deception to pamper it. The saints have acted in this manner. The more they toiled and laboured for God, so much the less care had they of their body, so that it might the better serve the spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever, yea for ever and ever.* (Ps. cxliv, 21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that although a master is less exacting with a servant whom he has had many years in his service, yet between such a servant and our body there is still this difference. Towards our servants there is no fear of that irregulated self-love that there is towards our own body. With our servants we should certainly incline to be more gentle than rigorous, but with our own selves more rigorous than indulgent.

APPLICATION. Consider a little how you have observed this rule in your own regard, and how imprudent it is to concede too much to self-love and your senses and so make them rebellious.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Serve ye the Lord with fear : and rejoice unto him with trembling.* (Ps. ii, 11.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. . . . Now this he said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in him. (John vii, 37–39.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ in speaking of His faithful followers who were then the Apostles and now are those who are united to Him by a lively faith, said that all of them should receive from heaven streams of living water, which should inundate their own souls and flow forth for the benefit of their neighbour. This celestial water is the Holy Spirit, together with His gifts, which are called streams, to denote the abundance and the incessancy with which they flow. for, though widely diffused, they never in the least diminish. The Holy Spirit is like *a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail.* (Isa. lviii, 11.)

APPLICATION. Blessed then are you if you possess within you this fountain of living water *springing up into life everlasting*! Thus are you made one of Christ's faithful ones. Thus will you be able to rise to the perfection of your state of life, and to become also an active instrument for the salvation of your neighbour.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord ruleth me :*

and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. (Ps. xxii, 1–2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that these streams of living waters are given to the true followers of Christ, not in order that they should serve for themselves alone, but that they may also be poured forth for the good of others. *Let thy fountains be conveyed abroad and in the streets divide thy waters.* (Prov. v, 16.) It behoves you not to be satisfied with being good for yourself alone, but to strive also to be instrumental in the salvation of others as far as ever your state of life permits you, by good example, by edifying conversation and by fervent prayers. And if you are bound to all this in regard to those outside your own house, how much more so towards those of your own family and household.

APPLICATION. In order then that others should derive profit from these waters, it is necessary that they should flow forth from your heart whence they have their source. Some are careful to exhort others and to give counsel in private, but their words have little result, and why? Because these waters are not living but without life. They gush forth from impulse, from boasting, self-interest or from some other human motive. Strive to acquire within yourself these living fountains, which will render you a true and faithful follower of Christ and one who is profitable to your neighbour.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With my whole heart have I sought after thee.* (Ps. cxviii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if you would partake of these fountains you must dispose yourself to receive them. The Holy Spirit never forces Himself on any one. It is for you to desire Him. But how can you be thought

to desire Him if you make not use of the necessary dispositions to receive Him, as did the Apostles?

APPLICATION. These dispositions consist in desiring Him ardently, in imploring Him frequently, and in separating yourself from all those creatures which so occupy your heart as to leave no room for the Holy Spirit to enter in His plenitude, to fill and inebriate you as He did the Apostles. *It filled the whole house where they were sitting.* (Acts ii, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created: and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.* (Ps. ciii, 30.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE HOLY EUCHARIST OUR FOOD

My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (John vi, 56.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when Jesus Christ comes into your soul in the most holy Eucharist, He is in very truth your guest. But how different from all other guests! These when they enter your house come that they may receive at your hands. Jesus, not content with coming to you who are a vile creature of earth, wills moreover to prepare the table Himself, and to give you Himself as food.

APPLICATION. Reflect awhile and see what amazing love is this on the part of your Lord that should fill every soul with astonishment and wonder.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord, he hath given food to them that fear him.* (Ps. cx, 4–5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is not only said that He

would give them to eat, but also to drink, so that you might understand that in the Holy Eucharist Jesus gives to you a complete refection. Not indeed that to eat of His flesh is not also to drink of His blood, and to drink of His blood not the same as to eat His flesh; but in giving you to partake of the two species of bread and wine He would have you remember all that He suffered for you in that most cruel and bloody death of the cross.

APPLICATION. Remember then that in this sacred banquet you receive that most holy body, which for your sake was the victim of a most bitter death, and that you partake of that blood which for love of you gushed in such great streams from His veins. With this thought, how fully will your soul be refreshed and rejoiced, so that it cannot refrain from burning with love towards Him Who has loved you to so great an extent.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He fed them with the fat of wheat, and filled them with honey out of the rock.* (Ps. lxxx, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if it be a marvellous thing that our Lord should give Himself to His creatures in so perfect a manner, still more amazing is it that He should give Himself to the ungrateful. *He shall feed and give drink to the unthankful.* (Ecclus. xxix, 31.) And indeed how few are those who are truly grateful to our Lord for the ineffable benefit left us in the most holy Sacrament! How many there are who immediately after receiving Him into their breasts drive Him away again by giving entrance to the devil into their hearts. Any kind of ingratitude seems hard to bear, but still harder is that of him who was daily fed at your table. And yet this is what Jesus is con-

tinually subjected to by men, for after He has shown them such immense goodness in giving even Himself to them as food, ingratitude is the return they make.

APPLICATION. Can you then doubt that He Who has given you Himself will not give you also every other good thing? Can you fear that He will not protect you with a special love, after having made you a mystical member of His body in the most Blessed Sacrament?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord.* (Ps. CXV, 12–13.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

GOD'S LOVE FOR MAN

God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son. (John iii, 16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the difference that there is between our love and the divine love. We are moved to love another because of some good in himself. God on the contrary is moved to love man, not because he is good but because He would make him good. The sculptor sees the tree in the forest and is pleased with it, not for what it is in itself, but because of what he designs to form from it with his chisel. So likewise does God act towards us, but in a much higher degree. He imparts the dispositions necessary for the successful issue of the work, a thing the sculptor cannot do.

APPLICATION. When you love any one you are moved to do so by the good qualities you perceive in

the person. But God's love towards you is not for the good qualities He sees in you. It has no other motive nor beginning than His own love. Will you not then in return learn to love Him Who loves you so disinterestedly, and Who has in Himself so many reasons for being loved?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.* (Ps. xvii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this love of God towards you has been perpetual. He has loved you from all eternity, not in a general way with all mankind but in particular and individually. How is it then possible that you are not moved to love Him in return? You often feel yourself drawn towards one who has done you a favour, who has promoted your interests, and yet of whom you had no previous knowledge. What therefore should you not feel towards God Who has loved you before you were born into the world, and before even the world was formed? *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* (Jer. xxxi, 3.)

APPLICATION. Will you not then love Him Who has loved you from all eternity? Were you to abandon so true and tried a friend for others, new ones, you would learn your folly to your cost. *Forsake not an old friend, for the new will not be like to him.* (Ecclus. ix, 14.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord keepeth all them that love him.* (Ps. cxliv, 20.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that God having out of pure love chosen you from all eternity, ordained in like manner the best means suited to draw you to Himself. *Therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee.* (Jer., ibid.) Contemplate a little the facility and opportunities He has given you of doing good during your lifetime, so

that He might say in very truth: *I have drawn thee.* God has used a loving violence in order to conquer the resistance of your rebellious will, and whereas He might well have abandoned you, He has continued to strengthen and show mercy towards you. *I have drawn thee, taking pity on thee,* notwithstanding your ignorance and weakness, your malice and perversity.

APPLICATION. For so many and so great acts of goodness and of mercy, do you not feel yourself constrained to yield and give yourself up to Him once for all as conquered?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let such as love thy salvation say always: the Lord be praised.* (Ps. xxxix, 17.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

VALUE OF TIME

The night cometh when no man can work. (John ix, 4.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how quickly the years pass away. Think of the years of your own lifetime that have already gone by. How short they seem to you! And yet in the same fleeting manner will the few years or weeks or days of life that may still remain to you glide by. How is it then that you manifest so little solicitude to store up merit for heaven? And yet you devote so much time to sleep, to idleness, to mere vanities and useless diversions.

APPLICATION. Be diligent therefore in prayer, the praise of God, study, and work for your neighbour, because you will reap reward in heaven in proportion as you have sown during the brief days of life that remain to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My days have*

declined like a shadow : and I am withered like grass. (Ps. ci, 12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the time of life is not only short but once past is irrevocable. All that you now lose of it is gone for ever! Neither can it ever be recovered, even as the water that has once rushed through the bed of a river can never be gathered up again. And notwithstanding all this do you still make such small account of it? At the moment of death how you will grieve for having lost it all so uselessly! Oh how you will then long to have again not only those years which you now neglect to use well, but also those hours, those minutes and even moments of time which now you value so little.

APPLICATION. You allow your time to flow on uselessly, whereas God on the contrary wills that you hold it in the same account as people are wont to value gold. *Let not the part of a good gift overpass thee.* (Ecclus. xiv, 14.) Do you not know that each moment of time well spent can gain for you far more than the greatest kingdom of the world?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be always in my mouth.* (Ps. xxxiii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what would be the life of a reprobate soul, if by an extraordinary favour of God it were permitted to rise from the dead and live its life over again. Think you that it would neglect to profit by the time thus given it by God? What anxiety would at once take possession of it in its eagerness not to lose one single moment in view of its eternal salvation! And you, who perhaps have deserved more than once to be cast into hell, exert yourself so little to spend the time well which God in His mercy grants

you in order to expiate your past sins, and secure your eternal salvation.

APPLICATION. What will be your lot if then only you learn to value time, when time shall be no more for you? Repeat to yourself the words of holy Job: *I am walking in a path by which I shall not return.* (Job xvi, 23.) Our human life is a road along which we can walk once only. Blessed therefore is he who knows how to seize his opportunity and make the most of it by laying up riches for eternal life! Most miserable on the other hand is he who neglects it. Never in eternity will he be able to turn back and to make good his error.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *His will is in the law of the Lord and on his law he shall meditate day and night.* (Ps. i, 2.)

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

DETACHMENT

(Read John xvi, 5–14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Apostles when they heard from their divine Master that He was about to leave them and to depart from this world, were at once seized with sorrow and oppressed by sadness, because they understood not where He was going, nor sought they to find out why He was going. Had they but clearly understood how advantageous for them was this departure of their beloved Master, most assuredly they would have rejoiced and have been consoled.

APPLICATION. So has it happened with you Feeling yourself assailed by some trouble, or seeing that you must leave some particular work or place, you are at once distressed and disturbed. You grieve at

being deprived of certain advantages or at leaving some of your friends, but you reflect not on the great benefit which will result to you thereby. If you would but learn to resign yourself to God's will, and to what He knows to be best for you, you would then be consoled instead of being sad.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *There also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me.* (Ps. CXXXVIII, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what Christ said to the Apostles in order to comfort them: *It is expedient to you that I go.* It is for your good that I should depart, because if I do not leave you and return to My Father, the Holy Spirit cannot be given to you in all the fulness of His gifts. It must needs be that I first take possession of My Kingdom and then open the treasury of heavenly gifts. *If I go not the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go I will send Him to you.*

APPLICATION. The privation of the consoling visible presence of Jesus, was to gain for the Apostles the great benefit of receiving within their own souls the invisible presence of the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier. How much more to your profit it often is that you be deprived of sensible consolations in prayer, and still more that you lose that miserable comfort which you crave from creatures, in order that you may more fully receive the Holy Spirit the comforter Who will enrich you with His gifts! *It is expedient to you that I go.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I remembered, O Lord, thy judgments of old: and I was comforted.* (Ps. CXVIII, 52.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what was the reason why Christ said to the Apostles that the Holy Spirit would not come to them if He did not go away. In the cenacle

He had imparted to each of them the Holy Spirit when He said: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them.* (John xx, 22–23.) Why then was the Holy Spirit not to be given in all His plenitude whilst our Blessed Lord was still on earth? The reason is because this fulness was to be bestowed upon the Apostles, in order that they should go and preach to all nations the Name and the power of Christ. Now, however, whilst He was visible amongst them they would not have been able to leave the visible presence of their Lord so easily, and to separate themselves from Him to go and preach to the Medes and Parthians and other nations. Therefore it was necessary that they should be detached even from that affection, though so good in itself, which bound them to Jesus, in order that they might be the more ready to go forth and announce the gospel to the whole world.

APPLICATION. Now if this love of the Apostles, and this personal attachment to our Blessed Redeemer was an impediment to the coming of the Holy Spirit to them, how much greater hindrance to you are those less praiseworthy affections and inordinate attachments which keep your heart bound to creatures? It is essential that you should keep yourself detached from everything created if you would fully enjoy the Creator of all.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

EFFICACY OF PRAYER

If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask him. (Luke xi, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the great mistake you make in complaining that God does not hear you, whereas in reality He is more desirous to give than you to receive. To convince you therefore of your error our Lord would have you here consider that if an earthly father has not the heart to refuse his son that which he asks for his good, far less does your heavenly Father know how to refuse the requests which you make to Him.

APPLICATION. Should not such reasoning serve to take from you all distrust? Could you doubt as to your prayers being heard, if you would but carefully remember the difference there is between an earthly father and your Father Who is in heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He shall cry out to me: Thou art my father, my God, and the support of my salvation.* (Ps. lxxxviii, 27.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that every son is less a son in respect to his earthly father than he is to his heavenly Father. His earthly father is only father of part of his being, namely of his body. Consequently he does not love him with a full and a perfect love. Our heavenly Father, on the contrary, is the father of our entire being, and of our body as its first cause. He breathed a soul into it and thus produced a perfect human being. Moreover your earthly father is merely

your natural father. God is not only your natural but also your supernatural father, having raised you in the order of grace to His marvellous and divine sonship.

APPLICATION. If then your heavenly Father loves you infinitely more than your earthly father can do, will He not also be far more willing to hear and grant your petitions? Add to this, that your heavenly Father, because He is infinitely rich is nowise impoverished by what He bestows upon you, and because He is infinitely happy rejoices in nothing so much as to make you happy. On the other hand, an earthly father in giving to his son that which he has earned by the sweat of his brow deprives himself of that which he gives. Now therefore if an earthly father, in such need himself, gives willingly to his own children whatever they ask of him that may be for their good, how much more readily and bountifully will our heavenly Father give us what we ask?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him.* (Ps. cii, 13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, that, if your prayers are not heard at once, you must not complain of this, but should rather accuse yourself of not asking of God that which is for your true good: *Your Father in heaven will give the good spirit to them that ask him.* It is this good and holy spirit that God desires above all things to give you, the spirit of charity, the spirit of humility, the spirit of obedience and so likewise of all the rest, the good spirit, in a word, that shall speed you to the gates of paradise.

APPLICATION. If therefore you ask for the good spirit in the proper manner, do not doubt that God

will give it to you. If you ask other things, such as temporal goods, He will give them only when they will prove helpful in order to lead you to your home in heaven. He says: He *will give the good spirit*, not *He gives*. Hence if your prayer is not immediately granted, you must not think that your petitions are rejected. He knows the right time and therefore wills that you should go on persevering in prayer, even as a father does with his tenderly beloved son, when he defers to grant what he asks, because he rejoices to see him pleading before him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right land.* (Ps. cxlii, 10.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ETERNAL HAPPINESS

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy, . . . and your joy no man shall take from you. (John xvi, 20–22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that however much you may have to suffer, you must not lose heart. It may be that you must suffer in the work or in the place which providence has assigned to you, but it is only *for a time*. Temptations will end, adversities will end, humiliations will end, perhaps even before the end of your life which is after all so short. And then will come happiness immense in its greatness and infinite in its duration.

APPLICATION. Is not the knowledge that you will thereby gain an eternal reward of happiness enough to animate you to bear with patience the labours that you may have to endure for a short time here?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear.* (Ps. xvi, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you should not be desirous of rejoicing now, because this is not your time for rejoicing. Be content that it is to come. Observe how it is with a tree in winter time. Wretched looking, covered with snow, neglected, and quite uncared for. Wait however a little and then see. What a profusion now of leaves! What a wealth of flowers! What perfection and abundance of fruit! So shall it be also with you. Now too it is your winter. The tree that would be impatient to bud forth and rejoice before its time, would in turn soon begin to languish. And when at the spring time the other trees would appear rejoicing in all their glory and beauty, it alone would have to remain barren and without any value at all.

APPLICATION. So will it be with you if you are now anxious to anticipate that state which is proper only to the blessed in heaven. You are not in this world to rejoice, but to suffer and thereby to merit to rejoice hereafter. *In the world ye shall have distress* (John xvi, 33), as our Blessed Lord has told you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee.* (Ps. cxxxvi, 5–6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that our rejoicing will be in proportion to the suffering. God will bestow upon you joy just in proportion to the sacrifices you have here made for Him, and to the way you have denied yourself for the love of Him. *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* (Ps. xciii, 19.)

APPLICATION. Does there not perhaps lurk in your heart some want of trust in Him? Do not however

doubt that He is a most faithful debtor. Rather how much will He not give you over and above what you have given Him ! Instead of a momentary, empty and passing pleasure, suffice it for you to know that He will give you to rejoice in all His treasures and in Himself. *I am thy reward exceeding great.* (Gen. xv, 1.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

WE ARE SONS OF GOD

***I** ascend to my Father and to your Father.*
(John xx, 17.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the testimony which the Holy Spirit gives us that we are sons of God, is not an external testimony, such as that which was given to Christ at the Jordan. *The Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God.* (Rom. viii, 16.) It consists in that intimate sense of filial love of God which is infused in us, so that we detest sin purely because it is an offence against God, and we labour only to please Him and to seek His glory.

APPLICATION. The surest sign of being a son of God consists in acting like a son and in working only from a motive of love. Happy indeed are you if you have this love in your heart.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With my whole heart have I sought after thee.* (Ps. cxviii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that being a son of God brings to you the right also of being an heir of God and joint

heir with Christ. *If sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ.* (Rom. viii, 17.) This inheritance is God Himself. God does not possess riches distinct from Himself. All the riches and treasures which He enjoys in Himself He likewise gives to His sons to enjoy, without diminishing in the least the inheritance of any one of them. All participate in the same inheritance with Christ, Christ as Son by nature, we as sons by adoption. Never could we have attained to this adoption if Christ had not merited it for us by His prayers, by His sweat, and by His blood.

APPLICATION. Is it not a marvel indeed that, whereas on the one hand no human son has ever sought that his father should adopt some stranger in his own place, but from a selfish desire of reigning alone has come to slay even his own brothers, Christ on the contrary willingly gave Himself unto death in order that you might reign with Him? O what ineffable love!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast given an inheritance to them that fear thy name.* (Ps. lx, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you cannot come to be co-heirs with Christ without labour. For eternal happiness is not an inheritance like to those of this world, which often come to those who deserve them not nor even labour for them. Eternal happiness is given only to those who earn it by their labours and who merit it.

APPLICATION. How much had Christ, the true and only-begotten Son of God, to endure in order to merit heaven! And do you, a son by adoption, expect to receive it as it were for nothing? In order to reign with Christ it must needs be that you suffer with Christ. *If we suffer with Him.* (2 Tim. ii, 12.) But

when will you ever have to suffer as Christ suffered? You shall indeed suffer with Christ, but you can never suffer as He did.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor, and in labours from my youth: and being exalted have been humbled and troubled.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

SEEKING TRUE GLORY

I honour my Father, and you have dishonoured me. But I seek not my own glory. (John viii, 49–50.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how prejudicial it is to the soul to be ambitious of worldly honours. For this reason alone it was that many of the great ones among the Jews refused to accept the faith of Christ, for, as St. John says, *They loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.* (John xii, 43.) And this it is that also to-day makes many in like manner if not actually lose the faith, at least most undoubtedly lose that lively faith which consists in always acting according to its teachings.

APPLICATION. To act then as one of firm faith in Jesus Christ, in forgiving injuries, in yielding to others, in humbling oneself, it will be often necessary to conquer much human respect and expose oneself to many an unpleasant remark. But how can he expect to do this who idolises or at least seeks glory from men?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will sacrifice to thee the sacrifice of praise; and I will call upon the name of the Lord.* (Ps. cxv, 17.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how great is the folly of those who love the glory of men, notwithstanding that it so much hinders the glory that comes from God. That

which comes from God is real and founded on real merit. The glory which comes from men is empty, because they know not how, or do not wish, to form a just opinion of you; it is uncertain, because it often happens that you receive blame where you had hoped for praise; it is very unstable even after you have acquired it.

APPLICATION. Would you then still desire to have this empty and frivolous glory of men, and not rather seek the glory that comes from God? If you understood aright what it means to have glory before God, what little account you would make of the glory of men! You cannot have praise before God without having at the same time praise from all the hosts of the angels and all the choirs of the saints. Accustom yourself then not to prize other glory than that which you know by the light of faith.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *That I may be pleasing before God in the sight of the living.* (Ps. lv, 13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you ought not ever to make any account of the esteem and glory of men, even if it does not hinder your work for the glory of God, but is joined to it in such a manner that you have the intention of pleasing God alone; for this is in truth to seek *the glory which is from God alone.* Therefore he who desires to become very pleasing to God, must divest himself of all affection for self, so that he seeks to please God, but not for his own advantage; he only seeks it in order to accomplish the divine will in those things commanded him. This is to love God as He loves us.

APPLICATION. God loves us for our good, not for His own advantage. So if we work solely in order to

please God alone, and to promote His glory, we shall then be loving God for His own sake, not for what we may gain.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In God is my salvation and my glory; he is the God of my help.* (Ps. lxi, 8.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE GOOD OF ADVERSITY

Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you . . . be glad in that day and rejoice. (Luke vi, 23.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that joy is a present good. When therefore our Lord bids us to rejoice in the hatred and reproaches and persecutions of men, and St. James tells us to esteem adversities *all joy* (James i, 2), they would give us to understand that herein is included all good, because on earth true good consists in suffering much for God. And yet where are there to be found, even among the most spiritual of men, those who truly rejoice to have lost their sight or their hearing, or because they had received some great mortification or suffered a grave affront?

APPLICATION. And yet how can this be? Only because the rule of our life is not the rule of faith. Our apprehensions and our desires are governed by our senses alone. Strive always to be guided by the light of faith, and then let the foolish world suggest what it will.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* (Ps. xlix, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that adversity brings with it every good, in that it makes us acquire the great good

of patience. *It worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work.* (Ibid.) It gives you that perseverance which perfects and crowns all other good works. Patience makes you surmount the obstacles which you meet in persevering in the good begun, such as the depression of spirit and the attraction of the senses.

APPLICATION. Esteem therefore so great a good which adversity brings with it, giving you the patience to persevere in good works, in obedience, humility and your religious exercises, and so disposing you little by little to final perseverance; whereas without this patience you will never accomplish anything of any worth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my patience, O Lord: my hope, O Lord, from my youth.* (Ps. lxx, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this great good of the virtue of patience is not acquired by the chance suffering of some adversity, but by him who bears many afflictions with a constant exercise of patience. Speculate as much as you will, seek reasons for being enamoured with the virtue of patience; you will never acquire it better than by practising it. The soldier becomes brave not by studying his books, but by using the weapons he bears in his hands. *The trying of your faith worketh patience.* (James, ib.)

APPLICATION. Strive then to exercise yourself in patience on all possible occasions. In order that you may do so the better in the more difficult events of life, practise it also in the easier and more frequent occurrences, such as in the varieties of weather or of climate, in the little annoyances that arise from your neighbour, and in similar small things which will never

be wanting. Above all beg it most ardently of God from Whom all the good we have descends.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want for nothing.* (Ps. xxii, 1.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

DEATH AND ITS MEANING

Make to yourselves a treasure in heaven which faileth not. (Luke xii, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in holy scripture death is called both an awakening and a sleep. It is an awakening for the wicked; it is a sleep and repose for the just. At death the sleep by which impenitent sinners have been miserably oppressed now suddenly ends; the unstable things which they had sought after during life now vanish like dreams; they awake to a term of punishment to which repose will never succeed. On the other hand death is a sweet sleep for the just, because it ends the long sufferings and mortifications of this life, and they begin to enjoy the repose and the fruit of their labours and of their prayers. *From henceforth*, saith the Spirit, *that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.* (Apoc. xiv, 13.)

APPLICATION. Oh how much better it is for you willingly to watch and pray in patience now, during these few days of your life, in order that you may enjoy repose in death, than to be constrained to watch and suffer for ever and ever! Lay this earnestly to heart.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O God, my God: to thee do I watch at break of day. For thee my soul hath thirsted. For thee my flesh longeth, O how exceedingly.* (Ps. lxii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what holy Job says of the rich man, that when he dies *he shall take nothing away with him* (xxvii, 19). Having in this life aimed only at accumulating earthly goods, at the enjoyment of pleasures and the exercise of power, none of these will help or even accompany him in death. On the other hand, he who now diligently watches in doing good works, and in serving God, will take all this along with him into the other life to last for all eternity: *Their works do follow them.*

APPLICATION. Look well to what you do now. Those pursuits, those labours and those works that you now perform for God, and according to His good pleasure, will follow you, and you will enjoy their fruit for all eternity. Whereas if you work for human ends or to gain earthly treasures, *you shall take nothing away with you.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever, for the reward.* (Ps. cxviii, 112.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what will happen after death to him who was solicitous only for present things. He will be like the dreamer who awakens from sleep and searches for those riches which but just now he possessed. He cannot discover them. They have vanished with the dream. How great then will be his anguish and affliction! His dream he will then call accursed which deceived him into taking those goods as real by which he now finds himself made so poor, and in robbing him of goods that are lasting and eternal. He will curse his own folly and his madness. How will he then wish to have in very deed attended to eternal things, but there will be no more time left. He will have opened his eyes all too late.

APPLICATION. Be careful then to remain wisely awake and not to be seeking after those things which are mere dreams. Direct your attention to the acquisition of real goods which at death will make you rejoice in an everlasting kingdom.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All the foolish of heart were troubled. They have slept their sleep and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands.* (Ps. lxxv, 6.)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PRAYER

(Read John xvi, 23–30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, in order to increase in you the love of prayer, in what precisely lies its power of obtaining for you every true and best gift of heaven. It does not lie in the merit of him who pleads, but in the promise so often repeated in the holy scripture that we shall be heard: *Call upon me, and I will deliver thee.* (Ps. xlix, 15.) If Almighty God had not wished to hear us, He would not have so certainly promised to do so nor urged us in so many ways to ask Him. If He pours out so many good things on those who do not call upon Him, what will He not give to those who pray to Him trusting in His promise?

APPLICATION. When therefore you go to beg some favour of God in prayer, you ought not indeed to regard your own demerits which render you unworthy of being heard, but rather you should place all your confidence in the goodness of God Who has promised to help you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon thee.* (Ps. xxx, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the efficacy of prayer depends not only on the divine promise, but much more on the merits of Jesus, which He passes on to us as to His younger brothers. *If you ask of the Father anything in my name.* You might have reason to doubt about obtaining what you ask, in that you perceive no merit in yourself. But oh how great now ought to be your trust, because the merits of Jesus are all yours, and are regarded by the divine Father as if they were your own, by reason of that most intimate union which every member of the same body has with its head.

APPLICATION. If then you thus have at your disposal all the infinite merits accumulated for you by Jesus Christ, how can you fear that for want of your own merit you cannot obtain what you would petition for? The merits of Christ give us so great a right of being heard that we may ask of the Father the graces we need, not on the plea of His mercy but of His justice: *Deliver me in thy justice.* (Ps. xxx, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.* (Ps. lxv, 20.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what are the conditions that are required on your part in order that you may be heard. The first is that you be a living member of Christ through divine grace, since in members that are dead and cut off through sin the virtue that goes forth from the head produces no effect. The second regards the petition made, viz. that you petition for spiritual and for true goods: *Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full*, namely that good which can render you perfectly happy, or which shall

serve as a means to make you so. The merits which Jesus has acquired for us are ordained to enable us to obtain the good things of heaven, and not those of earth. Consequently these earthly benefits are not absolutely promised us as heavenly ones are, but are given to us over and above, when they will be a help and not a hindrance towards attaining our last end. The third condition is that you ask in faith, lifting up your heart to Him Who is the Omnipotent. *All things are possible to him that believeth.* (Mark ix, 22.)

APPLICATION. Pray therefore not only with faith, but with perseverance and without ceasing even when you do not find yourself answered at once, for God often defers to answer our prayers, because He rejoices in the homage we render Him by them, and because our desires are increased and our spirit is the more inflamed by our pleading the longer: *Be instant in prayer*, says St. Paul to the Colossians (iv, 2).

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Expect the Lord: do manfully. And let thy heart take courage: and wait thou for the Lord.* (Ps. xxvi, 14.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN

All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach all nations. (Matt. xxviii, 18-19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ having shown Himself to all His disciples on a mountain in Galilee as He had promised, said to them: *All power is given to me in heaven and earth*, meaning thereby that the fulness of that glory and power which was in all its fulness His right as the Son of God, He had further-

more gained by the merit of His passion and death upon the Cross.

APPLICATION. If then it behoved Jesus to secure by means of so much suffering all that which was already His: *Ought not Christ to suffer and so to enter into his glory?* (Luke xxiv, 26), can you who are a sinful child of Adam, a son of wrath, who for your sins have merited to be exiled from heaven and condemned to the abyss of hell, can you hope for the happiness of the elect, not by conquest but by inheritance, without toil and without suffering? This would be to expect an impossibility.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. Expect the Lord.* (Ps. xxvi, 13, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ by His sufferings merited and won the bliss of heaven not for Himself, but for us. Therefore He added: *Going therefore teach ye all nations.* In these words Jesus would give His disciples to understand that by the merits of His death He had opened to all nations the way of attaining to His heavenly kingdom. They must embrace His teaching and observe His divine commandments, and by being cleansed in the sacrament of Baptism must be added to the number of the faithful.

APPLICATION. How you should thank God Who has caused you to be born at a time so favourable to your salvation! You enjoy the happy lot of having been cleansed in holy baptism and of being numbered among His most intimate followers! But it is of no avail to bear the name of Christian by holy baptism, if one does not fulfil what one promised in that Sacrament. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* (Matt. xxviii, 20.) What will

it profit you to call yourself an intimate follower of Christ if you do not correspond with the obligations of your state?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have loved thy commandments above gold and the topaz.* (Ps. cxviii, 127.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that for the first Christians of the infant church it was necessary that their faith should be confirmed by miracles as our Blessed Lord said, *These signs shall follow them that believe*, etc. (Mark xvi, 17.) But now the faith needs not to be confirmed in the church by fresh miracles. It needs now rather to be developed and strengthened by the exercise of virtues. Hence cast out of your heart all vice and sin. Allow only becoming words to come from your lips, not as from the old and carnal man, but such as befit the new and the spiritual man. Cast out the poison of evil suggestions and temptations. Do all that lies in you to promote the salvation of your neighbour, healing the infirmities of their souls so far as your state of life may allow you to do so.

APPLICATION. Enter into yourself and consider whether all your actions are indeed those of a true Christian, seeking to serve God, and not those of a lover of the world; because the profession and the name of Christian alone without good works will not avail for salvation.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The iniquity of the proud hath been multiplied over me: but I will seek thy commandments with my whole heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 69.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CHRIST ABIDING WITH US

Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. (Matt. xxviii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that as our Blessed Redeemer was about to separate Himself from His disciples and to ascend into heaven, He promised them for their consolation that He would be with them even to the end of the world, not in His corporal and visible presence but spiritually and invisibly, in order to help and strengthen them. In losing their divine Master, what better comfort could they have wished for than to be assured of His being ever ready to help them, and to be ever present in their needs?

APPLICATION. In this promise of our Blessed Lord, made to all the faithful of all ages, even to the consummation of *the world*, you also participate. This same Lord Who is the supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, remains also with you to console and strengthen you in all your necessities. Is it not a great marvel that He Who has no need of you, should out of His immense goodness stand always by you to help you? Is it not a still greater marvel that you, who are so needy and so wanting in all good, should live so far removed from Him in your affections and thoughts, and should realise so little how to turn to Him in your needs?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed are all they that fear the Lord; that walk in his ways.* (Ps. cxxvii, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it was this promise which animated and strengthened the Apostles to undertake the struggle against idolatry, and to plant the faith

of Jesus Christ. It made them surmount many difficulties and gladly give up their lives amid the most cruel tortures. For each one knew he was not alone in all these combats, and that the irresistible strength of Jesus would triumph in them. *Be not afraid for I am with you.* (Jer. i, 8.)

APPLICATION. This certainty of having Jesus to help you, is what should encourage you to fulfil those duties which are imposed upon you by your state of life. Although it seems to you that you have not the requisite strength of body or gifts of mind for the perfect accomplishment of them, if you will but place your trust in our Lord He will give you help proportionate to the burden which He lays upon you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He delivered me from my strongest enemies, and from them that hated me.* (Ps. xvii, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Jesus fulfils this promise of always remaining with the faithful of His church. Firstly, He is with them as God in His immensity just as He is in every place. *For in Him we live and move and are.* (Acts xvii, 28.) Secondly, as God-man He is with the faithful by means of habitual grace which unites our souls to Him, and by actual grace with which He gives us strength to do good works. Thirdly Jesus is with the faithful by the special care with which He governs and directs them towards their last end, and much more so is He in the whole church to uphold and keep it firm against the assaults of hell. *And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* (Matt. xvi, 18.) Finally He remains with the faithful in His sacramental presence.

APPLICATION. If then Jesus abides in so many ways with His faithful, do you also on your part endeavour

all you can to remain with Him with all your mind and heart, in all your work and life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God.* (Ps. lxxii, 28.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PREPARATION FOR THE ASCENSION

And he led them out as far as Bethania, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. (Luke xxiv, 50.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus having given many instructions to the Apostles for the right government of His Church, in His various apparitions to them during the space of forty days, desired at the hour of His departure to show them still more tender marks of affection. He sat at table to eat with them, although His glorified body needed no food. He told them that He was going to heaven, there to prepare a place for each one of them in His Kingdom: *I go to prepare a place for you.* (John xiv, 2.) He assured them that before long they also should sit with Him on their thrones: *I will take you to myself that where I am you also may be.* (John xiv, 3.) Hence they were not to give way to sadness, but rather to rejoice in His return to His divine Father. With such demonstrations of His tender love did our Blessed Lord captivate the affections and bind the hearts of the disciples to Him.

APPLICATION. Learn hence how to behave towards your neighbour in order to win him to God, for sweetness will avail with him more than severity, as St. Francis Xavier so well discovered and practised in the Indies.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How sweet are thy*

words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth. (Ps. cxviii, 103.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY, that before ascending up to heaven Jesus led His disciples to the mount of Olives. *He led them out as far as Bethania,* which stood on a slope of this mountain where He had begun His sacred passion in a sweat of blood and the agony of death. Thus He would teach them that the true path by which to ascend to heaven is the path of suffering, and that glory and triumph succeed to pain and sorrow. What sentiments and affections must have been awakened in the hearts of Peter, James and John who had been the most intimate spectators of the agony in the garden, at beholding the scene so much changed! How it must have animated them lovingly to embrace the cross!

APPLICATION. Think often and seriously of the great blessings which you may confidently hope for in suffering for God in this life, so that you may thus come to love the cross more than all the delights and all the greatness of this world.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be thou mindful of thy word to thy servant: in which thou hast given me hope. This hath comforted me in my humiliation: because thy word hath enlivened me.* (Ps. cxviii, 49, 50.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus having reached the summit of the Mount of Olives, cast upon them a look of extraordinary majesty and sweetness. *And lifting up his hands he blessed them* (Luke xxiv, 50), as He gave them to kiss the sacred wounds in His feet and hands. Imagine what must have been the sentiments which filled the hearts of the disciples at that moment, but more particularly those of the Blessed Mother towards her Son and of the Son towards His Mother.

APPLICATION. How fortunate you would have counted yourself, had you been present, to be blessed by Jesus at His departure! Approach now as close as you may in spirit to kiss His sacred wounds and you likewise will be blessed, for the wounds of Jesus are the true source of every good and fountains of all blessings: *In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David.* (Zach. xiii, 1.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As the hart panteth after the fountains of water: so my soul panteth after thee, O God.* (Ps. xli, 2.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE ASCENSION

And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them and was carried up to heaven. (Luke xxiv, 51.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in the act of ascending from the earth into heaven, Christ appeared to the eyes of the disciples more glorious and luminous than in His transfiguration on Mount Thabor. The further He raised Himself by little and little from the earth, the more clearly did He give them to behold the gifts of glory wherewith His blessed body was adorned. What a spectacle of wonder and of joy it was to the Apostles now to see their divine Master ascending into heaven in such glory, after they had seen Him so humiliated in the cenacle washing their feet, and afterwards throughout all His passion so down-trodden and despised! With what desires and ardent affections must they not have followed Him in His triumphant ascension!

APPLICATION. Do you likewise accompany Him by

raising your heart from the lowliness of this wretched earth and valley of tears. But if you also would rise to the heights of glory, you must first humble yourself after the example of Jesus, Who ascended in glory to heaven, because He had abased Himself so humbly upon earth. *Now that He ascended, what is it, but because He also descended first.* (Ephes. iv, 9.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God is ascended with jubilee: and the Lord with the sound of trumpet.* (Ps. xlvi, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that as the disciples stood motionless with their eyes and hearts fixed upon this heavenly vision, *a cloud received Him out of their sight.* (Acts i, 9.) It was by a cloud that they were suddenly deprived of the further sight of our blessed Lord. This cloud, which mysteriously intervened and so obscured their vision, signified that in this our journey of life the consolations of the divine mysteries do not last long for us, but are to be enjoyed only for a short time and as it were in a passing manner. God wishes that the more solid virtues should be exercised amid obscurity, aridity and desolations. Moreover He would hereby also give us to understand that it is our passions, vices and sins which are the clouds intervening and separating us from God: *Thou hast set a cloud before Thee that our prayer may not pass through.* (Lam. iii, 44.)

APPLICATION. Bear well in mind then that all evil and ill-regulated affections in your heart are so many clouds which prevent your rising to heaven and rejoicing in the abundance of its blessings.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels.* (Ps. l, 12.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that as the disciples continued accompanying with their looks the triumph of Christ, they saw two angels descending who said to them: *Why stand you looking up to heaven?* He who is called to the apostolate of Christ must not shut himself up in mere contemplation, but must pass forward to the labours of his charge, to works for the good of his neighbour, and to the exercise of virtue. But if the disciples were reproved for standing there still contemplating the divine mystery, how much more reprehensible will it be to waste time in idle converse and pastime, neglecting to work when one should and as one should?

APPLICATION. Ever remember that you are a pilgrim in this short life, and as a pilgrim you should *go from virtue to virtue* (Ps. lxxxiii, 8), and not spend your time uselessly. For Christ will return before long in all that majesty with which to-day He ascended into heaven. And thus will you see Him at the moment of your death, when He will mete out to you the reward of your good deeds or the punishment of your evil ones. But it will be a reward or a punishment that will be eternal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the man whose help is from thee. In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 6–7.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

CHRIST'S ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN

Now glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself with the glory which I had, before the world was, with thee. (John xvii, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the triumphal entry of our Blessed Redeemer into heaven, followed by all that innumerable legion of souls delivered from limbo, of the just, of prophets, of patriarchs, and welcomed by all the choirs of angels who came forth to receive Him in triumph. Astounded even they at glory so immense they chanted in full chorus: *Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe walking in the greatness of his strength?* (Isa. lxiii, 1.) But how much greater even was the wonder and joy of those blessed souls, as they passed from the dark prison of limbo to the glorious abode of paradise. How fervently they thanked their loving Redeemer from their hearts, how they rejoiced now in all the sufferings which they had endured upon earth. All these seemed to them as a dream, as a mere nothing in comparison with the glorious reward it had gained for them, whilst they repeated the words of the Psalmist: *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us: for the years in which we have seen evils.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

APPLICATION. If you also would but often raise your thoughts to your heavenly country and there fix your heart, how short and light would appear to you too all the sufferings of this life which you must endure in order to attain to it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and*

fainteth for the courts of the Lord. (Ps. lxxxiii, 2, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY in the midst of all this jubilee of the angels and of the saints, the joy also of Christ Himself. He had now with so much glory reopened heaven, which for so many ages had been closed to the children of Adam. He had despoiled Lucifer of the supremacy which he so tyrannically held over the earth to the ruin of souls. He had by His doctrine and His holy example made known to all the true way to eternal salvation. So then in offering to His Father the spoils of these souls rescued from hell He could say: *I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now glorify me, O Father. ... I have manifested thy name to men.* (John xvii, 4, 6.)

APPLICATION. If you also can say all this at the moment of your death when you are about to appear before God, happy indeed will you be! But in the meanwhile mark well how you obey and glorify God, in promoting the good of your neighbour and in fulfilling the duties of your state, lest in that last hour you find yourself deceived.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart hath said to thee: My face hath sought thee. Thy face, O Lord, will I still seek.* (Ps. xxvi, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how exceedingly pleasing to the Father was the gift of these souls, and how He made His divine Son sit at His right hand that all the angels and all creatures might adore Him. Then the Son, by the supreme power which He had by His nature as God and which as man He had merited, assigned to these souls according to their merits, the places from which Lucifer and his companions had been driven, leaving however still innumerable places vacant for those who should come hereafter.

APPLICATION. You cannot indeed be sure if among these blessed ones there will be found place for you also. In order however to have a strong assurance of obtaining it, follow as closely as you possibly can in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Our Blessed Lord began at His ascension the work of advocate in heaven on our behalf, pleading for us with the voice of His blood and of His wounds: *We have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the Just.* (1 John ii, 1.) Do you also place all your trust in this so powerful an advocate by gaining His favour and avoiding drawing upon you His anger, for your cause would indeed be lost were this your advocate to be against you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Adore ye the Lord in his holy court. Let all the earth be moved at his presence. Say ye among the Gentiles: The Lord hath reigned.* (PS. XCV, 9–10.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

AWAITING THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

They adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy. (Luke xxiv, 52.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY, how before leaving the mount of Olives the disciples once more adored their Lord now reigning in the highest heaven, and kissed with tears of tenderness and with joy of spirit the marks left by His footprints as He ascended from earth. This joy was increased in their hearts by the faith which had been perfected in them at the sight of the glorious ascension of their divine Master; by the hope that was thus strengthened in them of one day beholding Jesus upon His throne; and by that intense

charity which made them exult in the glory of their Master.

APPLICATION. The ascension of our Blessed Lord should produce in you a similar joy, by means of a lively faith, a strong hope and a sincere charity. These are the sources of true joy by keeping your mind ever fixed upon this divine mystery, your desires aspiring to your heavenly country, and your heart soaring up to Jesus as a ray to its own centre.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy, casting their seeds.* (Ps. CXXV, 5, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the disciples, when they returned from the mount of Olives, all assembled in the cenacle in Jerusalem: *They entered into the cenacle and abode there*, in preparation for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

APPLICATION. Such is for you also one of the principal means by which to dispose yourself to receive the gifts of heaven, namely, to remain retired in quietness of soul, without too much going abroad or distraction. It is in this manner that in imitation of the disciples you ought during these days to await the coming of the Holy Spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As for me, my prayer is to thee, O Lord; for the time of thy good pleasure, O God. In the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.* (Ps. LXVIII, 14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, remembering the weakness they had shown and their grievous defections during the time of the sacred passion, they passed all these days in humbling themselves and in distrust of their own strength, praying and awaiting to be clothed with strength from above and armed with heavenly help.

APPLICATION. The more you presume and confide

in your own strength, so much the less will you receive help from God, Who *resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.* (James iv, 6.) Strive therefore to realise your own weakness, and acknowledge that of yourself you can do nothing, if you desire to be clothed by the Holy Spirit with *strength from above.* For He communicates Himself more liberally to those hearts which are empty of self, and which are less encumbered by earthly and worldly affections.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is high, and looketh on the low: and the high he knoweth afar off.* (Ps. cxxxvii, 6.)

THE SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

EFFECTS OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

(Read John xv, 26–xvi, 4.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY three effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit foretold by our Lord to the apostles in to-day's gospel. The first was: *He shall give testimony of me.* That is, the Holy Spirit will illuminate the minds of the apostles, to know the divine mysteries and understand the heavenly doctrines. During the whole three years that the apostles had been in the school of Christ their minds remained so dull, that when He spoke to them openly of His passion *they understood none of these things and this word was hid from them.* (Luke xviii, 34.) The language of the cross and of suffering so often repeated by the divine Master, was as one unknown to them of which they understood nothing. But on the coming of the Holy Ghost how well they understood the virtue and power of the Cross and the most sublime mysteries: *for the*

Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. (1 Cor. ii, 10.)

APPLICATION. If you would understand well the teaching of the gospel and penetrate the divine mysteries, earnestly and incessantly beseech of the Holy Spirit to illuminate you with His divine light: *Veni, Sancte Spiritus, et emitte coelitus lucis tuae radium.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created: and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.* (Ps. ciii, 30.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another effect promised to the apostles at the coming of the Holy Spirit: *And you shall give testimony of me.* Illuminated by the divine Spirit they were to enlighten all nations and people by the preaching of the gospel, and thus convert them to the faith of Christ. For it is characteristic of those who are full of the divine Spirit, not to rest content with being good themselves, but to endeavour to lead others also to a better life. Know also that the divine Spirit resembles a river, *Rivers of living water shall flow.* (John vii, 38.) The Holy Spirit gives Himself, not that He may remain enclosed in the soul of him who receives Him, but that He may flow out for the benefit of all.

APPLICATION. It is essential then that you be not content with being good yourself, but must strive also to do good to your neighbours. If it be not given to you to do this by preaching the gospel or labouring in the missions, you must do it by your good example, by prayer, by the comfort and counsel you give to others. And this river of good must flow not only from your mouth but also from your heart; for if its source is not in your heart, it will avail but little.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart hath*

uttered a good word: I speak my works to the king. (Ps. xliv, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the testimony which the apostles were to give of Christ in virtue of the Holy Spirit was not to be in word only, but also by the sufferings, persecutions and martyrdom which they bore with invincible patience and joy: *And they went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.* (Acts v, 41.) Suffering thus with joy for the honour of Christ, as it was the most convincing proof which the apostles gave of the truth they preached, so it was likewise a most evident sign that they had been armed by the Holy Spirit with virtue and heavenly fortitude.

APPLICATION. By this proof of suffering you may discern whether you also are clothed with the virtue of the Holy Spirit, which moves hearts not less to endure patiently than to work for the glory of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my patience, O Lord: my hope, O Lord, from my youth.* (Ps. lxx, 5.)

MONDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION

MATTHIAS CHOSEN IN PLACE OF JUDAS

He called unto him whom he would himself; and they came to him. And he made that twelve should be with him. (Mark iii, 13–14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that God has need of no man and least of all of you. If then you fall away from Him and fail to secure your eternal salvation, He will find another to fill your place, as He found Matthias to fill the apostolate from which Judas fell away. Therefore, *hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown.* (Apoc. iii, 11.)

APPLICATION. In order then to hold fast your crown, see that you abuse not the graces and favours which God has bestowed upon you. For then you would have just reason to fear that, in consequence of your want of correspondence and your ingratitude, God would deny you those special and efficacious aids which He gives you out of His purely undeserved goodness, and without which you would infallibly be lost. How many there are who consequently fall from an eminence of wisdom, of learning, and even of sanctity and so come to lose their souls.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have cleaved to thy testimonies, O Lord : put me not to shame.* (Ps. cxviii, 31.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ did not Himself substitute any one in the place of Judas, as He might have done during the forty days He remained on earth after His resurrection. He left the choice to St. Peter, the head of the apostles, and to the Church assembled in the cenacle. This He would do in order to show the tender providence by which He would authoritatively govern the Church through its superiors. Observe too the means which were adopted in the cenacle and which may be reduced to two, viz. union among themselves, all being indifferent and resigned to the good pleasure of heaven, no one ambitioning for himself the office of apostle, and then prayer or recourse to God : *Do thou Lord show whether of these two thou hast chosen.* (Acts i, 24.)

APPLICATION. You likewise must use these same means of indifference and recourse to God when you would make and confirm your resolutions.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unto thee will I cry, O Lord ; O my God, be not thou silent to me. Hear, O*

Lord, the voice of my supplication when I cry to thee. (Ps. xxvii, 1–2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that two were proposed to their choice, Barsabas, who was a kinsman of our Blessed Lord and brother to two of the apostles, and who was surnamed the Just because of his virtues, and Matthias. *The lot fell upon Matthias and he was numbered with the apostles.* (Acts i, 26.) Barsabas resented not being passed over for one whom he might have deemed his inferior, neither did he fail to fulfil the part which God demanded of him, acknowledging in his humility his unworthiness of so exalted a position. Neither did Matthias yield to sentiments of pride at seeing himself preferred, but strove all the more to satisfy to the full the obligations now laid upon him, remembering that he had been chosen to fill the place from which Judas had so unhappily fallen.

APPLICATION. Learn from Barsabas to be resigned when you see yourself neglected for one whom you may regard as your inferior; and from Matthias to keep yourself in humility and in fear when the preference is rather given to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us: for the years in which we have seen evils.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION

PREPARATION BY PRAYER FOR THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

He will give the good Spirit to them that ask him. (Luke xi, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the disciples doubted not of the coming of the Holy Ghost Who had been so many times promised them by Our Blessed Lord.

They did not however neglect to do all in their power to dispose themselves to receive Him in His fulness, remaining retired in prayer in the cenacle. They understood well that in order to receive those graces which God wishes to communicate to us, we on our part must prepare ourselves to receive them. The better our dispositions are, the more copious will be the gifts of grace which we shall obtain, for God is wont to give according to the measure of our co-operation.

Application. You also desire that the Holy Spirit should come into your heart, but the desire is not sufficient without that which will enable you to merit this grace. Endeavour therefore to prepare and dispose yourself for His coming as did the apostles.

Affections and resolutions. *Create a clean heart in me, O God : and renew a right spirit within my bowels.* (Ps. l, 12.)

Consider secondly that the principal preparation of the apostles consisted in remaining in prayer. *All these were persevering with one mind in prayer.* (Acts i, 14.) For prayer is the efficacious means to dispose us to obtain the graces of heaven ; but more especially to obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit. *He will give the good Spirit to them that ask him.* (Luke xi, 13.) God has established this law that it is through our prayers that He gives the good gifts which He has promised us. *Call upon me and I will deliver thee.* (Ps. xlix, 15.) By calling upon God we honour Him, acknowledging Him thereby as the source of all our good : *Call upon me, and thou shalt glorify me.* Moreover in prayer we exercise many acts of faith, of religion, of humility and of confidence. We also come to have more esteem for His gifts, even as the value of goods is increased by the

desire expressed for them by those who would acquire them.

APPLICATION. What use have you made up to now of this so efficacious means of prayer? *At least from this time call to me.* (Jerem. iii, 4.) At least seek to profit well by prayer during these days of preparing yourself to receive the Holy Spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.* (Ps. l, 14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the apostles did not cease to pray during all the ten days they abode together in the cenacle, *persevering in prayer*; and they would have continued to pray longer had the coming of the Holy Spirit been deferred. Neither does it behove us to imagine that, in order to obtain so great a gift, it will suffice to recite occasionally a *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, or that God will answer your petitions as a favour immediately they are presented to Him. *We ought always to pray and not to faint.* (Luke xviii, 1.)

APPLICATION. Understand therefore that God defers to grant you favours, not because He is unwilling to give them, but because He would increase your desire for them by this His delay, and because your repeated acts of homage dispose you to receive them the more copiously. Therefore learn to avail yourself of the delay by multiplying your petitions, constraining God almost by force to give them to you. *Be instant in prayer.* (Col. iv, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God: my tears have been my bread, day and night.* (Ps. xli, 3, 4.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION

PREPARATION BY CHARITY FOR THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matt. xviii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the apostles not only were *persevering in prayer* but they were *with one mind.* (Acts i, 14.) They were united in themselves by interior recollection, and united with each other by the bond of charity. They were united in themselves because all their thoughts, all their desires, and all their longings, were directed to the one end of yearning and pleading for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION. Such should also be your preparation to receive the Holy Spirit in all the plenitude of His gifts. You should remain not only wholly recollected in prayer; but throughout the occupations of these days you should keep your heart and mind directed towards His coming, by means of constant, fervent aspirations and ejaculations. As the needle of the compass points always towards the Pole, so should all your efforts and all your actions at this time be directed to the end of obtaining the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn again, O God of hosts. Look down from heaven, and see and visit this vineyard. And perfect the same which thy right hand hath planted.* (Ps. lxxix, 15, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Apostles were united among themselves not only in the union of prayer, all asking for the same gift, but were also still more united in the bond of charity: *But one heart and one*

soul. (Acts iv, 32.) This union and this concord with others is the most essential means for obtaining the Holy Spirit. For this divine Spirit is essentially love and the bond of charity, and will not reside in a heart where there is disunion and discord.

APPLICATION. Examine yourself somewhat and see if in your heart there is any want of union with or aversion towards your neighbours. Learn to bear with their defects, strive to accommodate yourself to their tastes where you may rightly do so, and try to preserve peace and charity with all.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* (Ps. cxxxii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in order to dispose themselves to receive the Holy Spirit, the apostles remained *with Mary the Mother of Jesus.* (Acts i, 14.) They united their supplications with the prayers and the merits of the Blessed Virgin, for they knew that, as it was by these same merits and prayers she had hastened the coming of the divine Word to clothe Himself with human flesh in her womb, still more would she obtain for them the hastening of the coming of the Holy Spirit into their hearts.

APPLICATION. Do you also join your prayers with those of the most Holy Virgin in the cenacle. Beg of her to present your requests to the divine Father. Thus will you render them efficacious in obtaining the fullest and most abundant grace of the Holy Spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O look upon me, and have mercy on me: give thy command to thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid.* (Ps. lxxxv, 16.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION
THE HOLY GHOST OUR TEACHER AND HELPER IN PRAYER

The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things. (John xiv, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that you have the utmost need of prayer and of petition. But in order that you may be heard you need above all to have humble recourse to the Holy Spirit, Who is the teacher of all good prayer and supplication. Of ourselves we do not know what we should ask for nor how we should ask it. *We know not what we should pray for as we ought.* (Rom. viii, 26.) It is the Holy Ghost Who teaches us how and what to ask: *The Holy Ghost will teach you all things.* (John xiv, 26.)

APPLICATION. Jesus Christ has given us in the *Pater noster* the pattern of perfect prayer, but it is the Holy Spirit, Who as a kind teacher suggests to us the manner of making particular requests and adapts them to our capacity and need: *He will bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you.* (John xiv, 26.) Each time therefore that you go to prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to assist and direct you, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus,* so that your prayer may bear abundant fruit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Cast me not away from thy face: and take not thy holy spirit from me.* (Ps. l, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Holy Spirit not only as a master teaches us to pray, but also helps us to do so. *The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity.* (Rom. viii, 26.) This help which the Holy Spirit is accustomed to bestow in prayer consists in those lights,

in those affections and longings of loving hearts, that are understood by those only who experience them.

APPLICATION. Happy are you if you have been able to experience them even in part. Beseech of this most loving Spirit that He will deign to grant you those helps. Without them your prayer will be like a body without a soul, but with them it will be so inspired with life as to enable you to ask for and to obtain all good things.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O God, come to my assistance ; O Lord, make haste to help me.* (Ps. lxix, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it belongs to the Holy Spirit not only to direct and help us to pray but also to pray for us as our advocate. *He asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.* (Rom. viii, 26.) Jesus Christ is our advocate in heaven at the right hand of the Father. *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just.* (1 John ii, 1.) The Holy Spirit acts as our advocate here by speaking within us, in the same way as it was said He spoke to the prophets and apostles : *It is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* (Matt. x, 20.) So now also He speaks in us and prays for us, when we are at prayer. *He himself prayeth for us.* Oh how precious and efficacious is that prayer in which the Holy Spirit speaks and pleads with God the Father for us !

APPLICATION. But here remember that the Holy Spirit does not enlighten nor help nor speak in the souls of all who pray, but only in those who strive to pray well. *He helpeth our infirmities*, as St. Paul tells us (ibid.). This shows that you should do your utmost to pray well, that you should prepare yourself, by being retired, recollected and by seriously applying

yourself to prayer. If you do all in your power to pray well in spite of your weakness, the Holy Spirit will be moved to give you His aid and inspire your prayer so that it may be efficacious in obtaining the gifts of heaven, and above all in obtaining the fulness of the same Holy Spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight: the lifting up of my hands, as evening sacrifice.* (Ps. cxl, 2.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

THE TIME AND PLACE OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST

Stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high. (Luke xxiv, 49.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Blessed Lord, though He had so often promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit would come to them, would not make known to them the time of His coming. He might have sent Him directly after He ascended into heaven, yet He delayed ten full days before doing so, during which time the disciples remained within the cenacle waiting and praying, without knowing when the Holy Spirit was to come. What a great instruction this to teach indifference, and resignation to the divine Will, as to the time and manner of receiving the gifts of heaven which we desire and ask for. God is the master and will give us His good gifts when He pleases.

APPLICATION. Therefore you should endeavour to abandon yourself entirely into His hands, and not allow yourself to be too anxious about delay, nor render yourself unworthy by impatience. For God well knows the opportune moment wherein to grant you the

graces that you ask and desire: *If it make any delay wait for it.* (Hab. ii, 3.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With expectation I have waited for the Lord and he was attentive to me.* (Ps. xxxix, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that God chose the day of Pentecost for the coming of the Holy Spirit, on which day He had formerly given to His Hebrew people the law written on Mount Sinai. This was to denote that, whereas the law given on Sinai was written on tables of stone because it was a law of fear, suited to a people still in a state of servitude, the new law of the gospel on the contrary, which is a law of love, is written by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, who should observe it not with servile fear but with a filial love, seeing that they have been raised to the true sonship of God.

APPLICATION. How far do you observe the precepts and the counsels of this new law of Jesus Christ? Is it with servile fear or with the love of a son? Ask the Holy Spirit to come and inscribe in your heart the sweet law of love, which will thus make the yoke both lighter for you and more profitable to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.* (Ps. xvii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Holy Spirit was given in the cenacle, and that this was a figure of the Church. The Church then is the ark where alone salvation is to be found, and outside of which as in the days of the flood, there is no safety. Whoever therefore lives in the bosom of the Church as a true son may hope to receive the Holy Spirit, provided he duly disposes himself to receive Him.

APPLICATION. We too may take comfort to our-

selves from the fact that the Holy Spirit was given, not only to the apostles and to the first disciples, but afterwards to all of those also who, converted by the Apostles, embraced the faith of Christ. *God is not a respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh justice is acceptable to him.* So says St. Peter (Acts x, 34, 35).

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 5.)

WHITSUN EVE

THE HOLY GHOST SENT BY JESUS CHRIST

If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. (John xvi, 7.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in the same way as the Divine Father in His boundless goodness gave His only Son to the world, *He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son*, so likewise at Pentecost in the excess of His love He willed to give the person of the Holy Spirit, by reason of the merits and the prayers of Christ, Who completed and perfected the work of our redemption by the coming of this most Divine Spirit.

APPLICATION. How far do you endeavour to correspond to this liberality and goodness of the Divine Father? How far do you show yourself generous and ready to be employed in all that is for His glory and good pleasure? In giving to you the Son and the Holy Spirit, God has given Himself to you entirely, for He differs from them not in substance but only in person. Ought you not then in mere gratitude to give Him your whole self, and employ yourself entirely in His service?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how we are bound to thank our Lord for having obtained for us by His merits and His prayers the Holy Spirit in order that by His gifts our darkness might be enlightened and our weakness strengthened. Christ indeed has taught us His heavenly doctrines, but if the Holy Spirit does not give us light and understanding we of ourselves cannot comprehend them, even as the Apostles before Pentecost did not understand them. Christ has given us examples of sublime virtue so that we too may act accordingly, but without the grace of the Holy Spirit we should not know how to move one step in the imitation of Him. Christ has raised up the standard of the cross to animate His followers to despise the pleasures of this life and to embrace the difficulties of suffering; but we need to be strengthened for these labours by the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION. Thank our Blessed Lord that He has merited for us this great gift which is so necessary for our weakness and for our miseries, and on your part do all you can to obtain it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge, to save me. For thou art my strength and my refuge.* (Ps. xxx, 3, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that our Blessed Lord gave us the Holy Spirit in order that all these good gifts might be produced in us: *that he may abide with you* (John xiv, 16), that the Holy Spirit might dwell in our soul even as the soul dwells in the body. The soul gives life to the body by dwelling in it, and so animates it as to give it strength to move, and to effect in union with it all that is proper to man. Thus the Holy Spirit abiding

within us vivifies us by His sanctifying grace, and by His actual gifts and inspirations strengthens and moves us to perform, in union with Him, acts of virtue suitable to man raised to the supernatural life of grace.

APPLICATION. Not less than the difference between a living and a dead body, is that between one who is animated by the Holy Spirit and one who is not. Beseech therefore as earnestly as you can this most Divine Spirit to come into your soul: *Veni, Sancte Spiritus.* In this way will you *be changed into another man* (1 Kings x, 6), as were also the apostles.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For who is God but the Lord? Or who is God but our God? God who hath girt me with strength; and made my way blameless.* (Ps. xvii, 32, 33.)

WHIT SUNDAY

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

(Read John xiv, 23–31; also Acts ii, 1–11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the coming of the Holy Ghost was first made known by the sound as of a mighty wind, which stirred the souls of the disciples and laid open the entrance to their hearts. This is the usual mode which the Holy Spirit adopts in order to dispose a soul to receive Him. He opens the heart to the sound of His voice, and to the invigorating breath of His inspirations, by which the soul is awakened and prepared for the coming of the heavenly guest. But if the soul gives not heed to these inspirations but continues to slumber on in her negligence, assuredly the Holy Spirit will not enter therein.

APPLICATION. How far have you been prompt in giving ear to the inspirations of God? Regret your negligence in the past. Henceforth be more

attentive to the inspirations of heaven, if you would that the Holy Spirit should descend also upon you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bring to the Lord glory to his name: adore ye the Lord in his holy court. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of majesty hath thundered.* (Ps. xxviii, 2, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, after the sound had come as of a mighty wind, the Holy Spirit descended on the head of each one of the disciples in the form of fire and in the shape of a tongue. This was to signify that as it is the property of fire to purify, illuminate and inflame, so likewise this fire of the Holy Spirit came to those in the cenacle to purge them from every earthly affection, to enlighten their minds and to inflame their hearts with heavenly love. The Holy Spirit descended in the shape of tongues, because He would teach the Apostles, that it was by means of the preaching of the gospel that they were to spread this fire among all the nations.

APPLICATION. As you have great need of this divine fire to purify your desires, to illuminate your mind, and to inflame your heart with divine love, so must you fervently beg for it of our Lord. Blessed indeed will you be if you are found worthy to receive this fire abundantly. For then your life and works will be most meritorious in the sight of God, and most helpful to many souls.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou who makest thy Angels spirits: and thy ministers a burning fire.* (Ps. ciii, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it is the property of ordinary fire not to remain still, but to rise up on high. On the contrary, the property of the divine fire is to descend and to dwell in the hearts of the faithful.

It sat upon every one of them. (Acts ii, 3.) It descends from above, because, *Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above.* (James i, 17.) It remains permanently with us because the divine Spirit never departs from us, if He be not driven from us by our own fault: *that He may abide with you for ever.* (John xiv, 16.) With the apostles the Holy Spirit abided still more firmly, because they were confirmed in grace.

APPLICATION. May we not hope that on this most holy day we shall have, in some measure at least, received of this most divine Spirit, that our minds have been enlightened, and our hearts inflamed. But what will this avail us if we strive not that the Holy Spirit may dwell within us permanently, and never be compelled by our own fault to depart from us?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We depart not from thee. Thou shalt quicken us: and we will call upon thy name.* (Ps. lxxix, 19.)

WHIT MONDAY

THE HOLY GHOST, OUR LIGHT AND OUR STRENGTH

The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things. (John xiv, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the effect wrought on the apostles by the coming of the Holy Spirit. The first was on their minds, which being illuminated by the living light of heaven, discovered to them the falseness of temporal maxims and the truth of those eternal. It made them clearly recognise the vanity of all things present, and the supreme importance

of the future. Whereas the apostles had before striven among themselves for the first place, as to *which of them should seem to be the greater* (Luke xxii, 24.) they would now, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, esteem him to be the most honoured who was most ill-used and oppressed for Christ's sake.

APPLICATION. You also should greatly desire to possess this supernatural light in which up to now you have been so much wanting. For you have regarded the approval and esteem of men as a great good. You have been influenced by human respect in your actions. You have regulated your life according to the dictates of the world and its maxims. Beg of the Holy Spirit that He will enlighten you with a ray of heavenly light, so that you may see the mistakes you may have made, and so change the maxims and principles which have ruled your mind.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou lightest my lamp, O Lord; O my God, enlighten my darkness.* (Ps. xvii, 29.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the second effect which the Holy Spirit produced in the hearts of the apostles. They had before been so timorous that they all basely abandoned their master during His sacred passion. St. Peter their leader even still more shamefully had denied Him, and that at the words of a mere maid-servant. On the contrary, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they all showed themselves to be so brave and fearless that they boldly devoted themselves to preaching the faith of the crucified one, not fearing insults or threats, scourging or martyrdom which they had to encounter for the sake of Jesus.

APPLICATION. If a spark of this fire which inflamed the hearts of the Apostles could but penetrate into

your heart also, it would suffice to work a similar change there. For just as you have been solicitous in the past to seek your own ease and convenience, and to flee from all suffering, so much the more readily would you now become a generous lover of the cross. You would embrace suffering willingly for the love of our Lord, just as in the past you have sought your own satisfaction for your own individual pleasure.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He uttered his voice, the earth trembled. The Lord of armies is with us: the God of Jacob is our protector.* (Ps. xlv, 7, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY a third effect which was wrought in the Apostles by the Holy Spirit, namely that of changing even their very speech. Before the descent of the Holy Ghost, they had discoursed much of earthly things and of temporal interests. They had even concurred with Judas who through avarice had found fault with the generous devotion of Magdalen, in anointing the feet of our Blessed Lord with precious ointment. Now they spoke none other than a language more of heaven than of earth, discoursing on the greatness of God and the glories of Jesus Christ: *We have heard them speak the wonderful works of God.* (Acts ii, 11.)

APPLICATION. Examine what has been your manner of speech up to the present. Reflect how easily you have allowed yourself to censure and discredit your neighbour, to murmur against those in authority and to condemn them. Beseech the Holy Spirit that He would now give you the gift of speaking as it were a new tongue, if not that of an apostle, at least that of a true Christian. As St. James says, *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man* (James iii, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I said: I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I have set a guard to my mouth.* (Ps. xxxviii, 1–2.)

TUESDAY AFTER WHIT-SUNDAY

THE APOSTLES PREACH AT PENTECOST

It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you. (Matt. x, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that at the sound of the mighty noise which was heard throughout the city of Jerusalem, there quickly assembled a vast crowd, drawn partly by curiosity and partly by divine impulse. The apostles burning with zeal set themselves at once to preach the greatness of Christ. See here the tender providence of God in calling the people by means of this sound to hear and to be converted by the preaching of the apostles. Reflect moreover on the loving means employed by God to draw and to invite you to the practice of Christian perfection, which you have to such a great extent neglected. Observe also how the apostles did not fail to employ the gift bestowed on them by the Holy Spirit in co-operating for the salvation of souls.

APPLICATION. How do we, according to our state of life and opportunities, help on the salvation of our neighbour by our words and works, by our prayers and good example? Not only priests and religious, but those also living in the world owe a duty to God and to their neighbour in this respect. How do we stand in this matter?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth; and their words unto the ends of the world.* (Ps. xviii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what the apostles preached:

They spoke according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. (Acts ii, 4.) They preached, moved by the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and not from motives of vanity nor from self-esteem, but with the pure intention of glorifying God and of making known to the people the greatness of Him Who had been crucified. They preached the divine word in all sincerity, nothing solicitous for elegance of language or show of learning : *Not adulterating the word of God.* (2 Cor. ii, 17.)

Application. Endeavour in all you do to have a right intention of labouring for God alone. Let your mode of working ever be for the edification of your neighbour, if you do not wish that it be said of you : *You have sowed much and brought in little.* (Ag. i, 6.)

Affections and resolutions. *I will extol thee, O God my king : and I will bless thy name for ever.* (Ps. cxliv, 1.)

Consider thirdly that as the people saw the apostles who were poor fishermen, simple and uncultured, speaking with such wisdom, explaining the divine mysteries with so much eloquence, preaching the glory and the divinity of Jesus crucified with such ardour of spirit and making themselves understood in so many different languages, they were amazed and wondered, saying : *What meaneth this ?* (Acts ii, 12.) There were not wanting, however, some who mocked at their zeal and set them down as drunken men, as if wine, forsooth, could have conferred that gift of tongues and their heavenly wisdom.

Application. It is not to be wondered at that there are always to be found those who are ready to censure virtue and to mock at even the most holy works.

Be very cautious therefore in blaming or condemning the actions of your neighbour. For it is only too easy to judge wrongly even the most virtuous. Moreover in making yourself judge of what does not concern you, you render yourself deserving of rigorous judgment at the tribunal of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enter not, O Lord, into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living shall be justified.* (Ps. cxlii, 2.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER WHIT-SUNDAY
FRUITS OF THE PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES

He that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do. (John xiv, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the apostles seeing themselves treated as fools and laughed to scorn by the people, did not in consequence abandon their enterprise or cease from preaching and announcing the greatness of God. On the contrary from the ridicule and insults of the people they drew occasion to teach and declare the divine mysteries all the more. It is a real mark of true apostolic spirit to seek the glory of God and the good of souls, casting aside all fear of becoming the reproach of men.

APPLICATION. But how different it is with you. You are ready enough to exercise those duties which seem to bring you credit but you hold back where you fear to lose your reputation. Thus you show clearly that in your work you do not aim at labouring for the glory of God but rather at fostering your own self-love!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Redeem me from*

he calumnies of men; that I may keep thy commandments. (Ps. cxviii, 134.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how St. Peter, the head of the apostles, with more than human wisdom made all these people understand, that he and the other apostles were not drunk with wine, but filled with the Holy Spirit of God promised by the prophet Joel. With admirable courage he reproached them with the crime of deicide committed by the killing of Jesus, the true Son of God, Who had risen triumphantly from the tomb. With such fervour of spirit did he speak that all who heard him were astonished and convinced. Hence whereas at first the apostles had been jeered at as drunk with new wine, they were now recognised as teachers of heavenly truth. Such is the fruit obtained by those who have the true spirit of God, and who preach the word of God with a holy freedom without fear of human respect. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* (2 Cor. iii, 17.)

APPLICATION. If you are consecrated to this sacred ministry learn from the apostles how you should exercise it. If not, then beg of God to give the true apostolic spirit to those who have to exercise it, and do not yourself neglect to help and edify your neighbour by your private conversations.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be always in my mouth.* (Ps. xxxiii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the consolation and the joy of the apostles in witnessing, at one and the same time, the conversion to the faith of three thousand people, and at another of five thousand. They did not become proud nor vain at such conversions. Rather

they attributed them all to the efficacy of the blood of Christ which it was His will should avail also for those who had taken part in His death, and that in virtue of the prayer He offered on the cross : *Father, forgive them.* (Luke xxiii, 34.)

APPLICATION. When it is granted you to do something fruitful of good for your neighbour, do you also rejoice for the glory it gives to God. But learn also how to attribute all to God without giving way to vain-glory, remembering that without the special help of God you could not do any good, either for yourself or for others : *Without me you can do nothing.* (John xv, 5.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The heavens show forth the glory of God ; and the firmament declareth the works of his hands.* (Ps. xviii, 2.)

THURSDAY AFTER WHIT-SUNDAY

THE EARLIEST CHRISTIANS

A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you. (John xiii, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what was the manner of life of these first Christians who were converted to the faith. They were assiduous in hearing the teaching and instruction which the apostles gave them. Each day they came together to receive Holy Communion ; and they persevered in the exercise of prayer, whether vocal in common or mental in private.

APPLICATION. Behold here a model to which you should try and conform yourself in order to live a truly spiritual life. The minds of these first Christians were enlightened by the word of God which they heard. They were strengthened and sanctified in spirit by the devout and frequent reception of Holy Commun-

ion. By diligent and regular prayer they led a life that was more supernatural than human. If you experience not similar effects, it is a sign that you either neglect these means, or that you do not practise them with the diligence that you should.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight: the lifting up of my hands, as evening sacrifice.* (Ps. cxl, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how these first Christians were inspired by the Holy Spirit to embrace evangelical poverty. They laid all their goods at the feet of the apostles, together with the value of their possessions, in order that they might all live in common: *They had all things in common.* (Acts ii, 44.) This renunciation of earthly possessions which is the chief foundation of evangelical perfection was most exactly observed by the first Christians. We may gather this from the punishment of sudden death inflicted on Ananias and Sapphira, who secretly kept back part of the price of the sale they had made when they laid it at the feet of the apostles.

APPLICATION. Not all are called to make a vow of poverty as these first Christians did. Still all of us like them must ever strive to live so detached from temporal goods, that they may never be able to become a grave obstacle in our duties to God or to our neighbour, or in the practice of virtue. How are our hearts disposed with regard to riches and money, alms to the poor and an aid to good works? In one word how far are we attached to mere creatures and not to God?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The just shall see and fear, and say: Behold the man that made not God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his riches.* (Ps. li, 8, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the union and the perfect bond

of charity in which the primitive Christians lived. *The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.* (Acts iv, 32.) It was by this mutual love for one another that they were at once recognised by the heathen as the disciples of Christ. In astonishment they said to one another: *See how they love one another and how they are ready to die for one another.*

APPLICATION. How far is this mark and distinction, so proper to the disciples of Christ, to be seen in you? How far do you maintain charity with your neighbour? Remember that it does not suffice to keep this love stored up in your heart. It should be visible to all men, as the divine Master declared: *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one for another.* (John xiii, 35.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Acceptable is the man that sheweth mercy and lendeth: he shall order his words with judgment.* (Ps. cxi, 5.)

FRIDAY AFTER WHIT-SUNDAY

THE APOSTLES SUFFER PERSECUTION

They will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues. (Luke xxi, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the number of the faithful increased in the city of Jerusalem through the preaching of the apostles, and the wonders wrought by them in the name of Jesus. Hence the chiefs of the synagogue were aroused, and commanded that the apostles should not again dare to preach the resurrection of Christ nor that He was the Son of God. For as they would not acknowledge Him as such, neither would they that the people should so acknowledge Him. Herein we see in the infant

Church the beginning of that persecution by the enemies of Christ which lasted for many centuries, and ever increased in strength. But neither have these same persecutions ceased in our own days. For if it be true that tyrants no longer exist among us, yet the persecutors and deriders of virtue are not wanting: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* (2 Tim. iii, 12.)

APPLICATION. Do not expect therefore to attain any great degree of virtue without suffering some contradiction, either from those of your own household or from others. For the virtue of those, who devoutly labour to promote the kingdom of God and the good of their neighbour, is purified and refined by such opposition.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast saved us from them that afflict us; and hast put them to shame that hate us. In God shall we glory all the day long: and in thy name we will give praise for ever.* (Ps. xliii, 8, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the apostles were nowise dismayed by the prohibition and threats of the chiefs of the synagogue, nor did they cease from preaching the resurrection and Divine Sonship of Christ. They were bound, they said, to obey God rather than man, and therefore could not cease to preach and testify to what they had seen of the wonders and glories of Christ: *If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye.* (Acts iv, 19.)

APPLICATION. Learn from this reply, made by the apostles, with what zeal you should proceed in the service of God. Whenever you encounter those who would oppose you, and seek to turn you away from your good purpose, say: I wish to obey

and to please God rather than men. With this maxim will you overcome all human respect, and be victorious over all your persecutors.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory over all the earth.* (Ps. cvii, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the chiefs of the synagogue seeing that the apostles made no account of their prohibition, condemned them to be ignominiously beaten. How did the apostles bear themselves under this suffering and humiliation? They came forth from the tribunal, joyful and contented that they had been deemed worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. *They went from the presence of the Council rejoicing, that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus,* (Acts v, 41) and they continued to preach more courageously and generously than before.

APPLICATION. If ever it should be your lot to suffer some little slight or hardship for having remained firm in pleasing God rather than men, blessed then will you be. How you should rather rejoice and show your contentment thereat! But how often for fear of some little word, a remark from your companions, or from some other motive of human respect, have you neglected your duty and left undone some good work in the service of God! Ask pardon, and beg of the Holy Spirit to infuse into your heart a zeal similar to that of the apostles.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord.* (Ps. xxx, 25.)

SATURDAY AFTER WHIT-SUNDAY

THE CONVERSION OF THE CENTURION CORNELIUS. (Acts x.)

I am not come to call the just but sinners. (Matt. ix, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when the preaching of the apostles and the faith of Christ had been scorned and rejected by the Jews, God so disposed that it should be received by the Gentiles in the person of Cornelius. He was a devout man fearing God, given to prayer and almsgiving to the poor : *A religious man and fearing God with all his house, giving much alms.* (Acts x, 2.) Hence because of his good works he was warned by an angel to receive and to embrace the faith taught by the apostle Peter.

APPLICATION. It was from no merits on your part that you were born in the very heart, as it were, of Christianity and that you received from God the gift of faith in Holy Baptism ? *The precious gift of faith.* (Wisdom iii, 14.) Do not then neglect to thank Him, for so great a gift denied to so many. Make frequent acts of thanksgiving and gratitude to God for His goodness and mercy to you above so many others, who would have served Him better.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Save us, O Lord our God . . . that we may give thanks unto thy holy name and may glory in thy praise.* (Ps. cv, 47.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, when God wished to make known to St. Peter His desire that he should especially apply himself to convert the neglected Gentiles rather than the obstinate Jews, He gave him to see in a vision *as it were a great linen sheet* wherein were to be seen all manner of animals, and at the same time He made him to hear a voice that said : *Arise, Peter, kill*

and eat. The apostle not understanding the meaning of the mysterious sign answered: *Far be it from me, Lord, for I did never eat anything that was common and unclean.* In this reply Peter showed that he understood not the mystery of the divine ordinances. At the same time he manifested his eager desire to observe the law, and not to violate it even at the invitation of heaven itself.

APPLICATION. And how often have you yielded to the invitation of your ill-regulated inclinations which induced you to break the commandments of God? Blessed indeed would you be if you also could say that you have never neglected the observance of the divine law, nor ever indulged in any pleasure contrary to it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How sweet are thy words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth.* (Ps. cxviii, 103.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the reply which St. Peter received from heaven: *That which God hath cleansed do not thou call common.* By this answer Almighty God taught St. Peter that those animals which it had been given him to see, signified the souls of the Gentiles. Moreover as Jesus Christ had shed His blood to cleanse and sanctify them, he should not regard them as unclean, but by means of the true faith and holy Baptism, he should purify them from their sins and incorporate them into the Church. This the apostle well understood when he heard himself called by Cornelius to instruct him, and later when the Holy Spirit descended at one and the same time upon many of the Gentiles.

APPLICATION. This answer, *That which God hath cleansed do not thou call common,* certainly ought

greatly to encourage you to promote the salvation of the very worst of sinners. Neglect no means of exhorting them, of praying for them, and of giving them good example, according to your opportunities. Thus labour to gain them for Christ, Who ransomed them at the price of His precious blood.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 53.)

TRINITY SUNDAY

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY

(Read Matt. xxviii, 18–20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the most distinctive mark of all the Catholic faith is the holy mystery of the most Sacred Trinity, by which we believe in one only God, and in one sole divine essence in three Divine Persons; in One God Who in Himself contains every kind of infinite perfection, our first beginning and our last end, our supreme Master and Monarch. *See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me.* (Deut. xxxii, 39.)

APPLICATION. In this lies the foundation of all your duty, namely to obey and serve God only, to acknowledge Him as the sole author of all your good, to hope only in Him for all your true happiness, to keep your heart turned towards Him, and to love Him above all things as your supreme good. But how many times have you placed your ill-regulated inclinations before the divine will? How little have you thanked Him for all the good He has done you? How little have you placed your trust in Him? And how much more have you loved poor, miserable creatures than your God and supreme happiness?

Be ashamed, and with contrition say with St. Augustine: *Too late have I loved Thee.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* (Ps. lxxii, 26.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how in God Who is one in essence, there are three divine persons. For God, the Father, contemplating and comprehending Himself fully generates an image of himself, substantial, complete and most perfect, which is the Divine Word, God the Son. The Father in contemplating this perfect image, *the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance*, (Heb. i, 3) loves It infinitely, and the Word again in return loves Him infinitely Who begot Him. This mutual love of God the Father and of God the Son is God the Holy Ghost, Who thus proceeds from the Father and the Son. Hence one God in three distinct divine persons Who are infinitely perfect and perfectly equal in all things. Jesus prayed in the cenacle, that this union which is among the three Divine Persons, might also be in the faithful. *That they may be one as we also are one.* (John xvii, 22.)

APPLICATION. Consequently it is this unity which you should above all things strive to attain to, namely unity with God, with those placed over you, and with your neighbours. Thus you will resemble as far as you can, the perfect union among the three Divine Persons.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* (Ps. cxxxii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you are made to the image of God and of the most august Trinity. For the

Creator has endowed you with a soul, which comprises three powers essentially united in themselves, and yet quite distinct from each other.

APPLICATION. Seeing then that you are the image of God, all your perfection must consist in resembling your divine original. Not indeed by the imitation of His power, as Lucifer unhappily tried to do, nor of His knowledge as Adam strove to do; but it is in the imitation of the holiness of His ways that God has expressly designed that you should resemble Him. *Be ye holy for I am holy.* It is for this that He is most especially adored and glorified in heaven by the angelic spirits, *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God.* (Apoc. iv, 8.) It is to this holiness of the divine ways that it behoves you to strive to conform yourself in your life, as far as possible.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Generation and generation shall praise thy works: and they shall declare thy power. They shall speak of the magnificence of the glory of thy holiness: and shall tell of thy wondrous works.* (Ps. cxliv, 4, 5.)

MONDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

PREPARATION FOR CORPUS CHRISTI

He will show you a large dining-room furnished, and there prepare ye for us. (Mark xiv, 15.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY in order to prepare yourself in these days preceding the solemnity of Corpus Christi, what was the preparation made by Christ for the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. First He sent two disciples to prepare *a supper room large and furnished.* Jesus was such a lover of poverty that a manger sufficed Him at His birth, and at His death He had not as much as a drop of water to

assuage His thirst. Why then did he seek a large room furnished in which to prepare the Eucharistic banquet for the poor fishermen? The reason was that you also might learn the preparation which you must make when about to approach this holy table and receive your God within your heart.

APPLICATION. Examine yourself as to what has been your preparation up to the present moment when going to the altar to receive Holy Communion? Have you gone there well prepared, or only through custom and as it were to some very ordinary duty?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man ate the bread of angels: he sent them provisions in abundance.* (Ps. lxxvii, 25.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the preparation was to be *in a large supper room.* Such also should be your heart in order to receive this divine guest, a large and a capacious one. According to the measure of the abode you prepare for our Lord, He will pour His divine treasures into your soul. That your heart then may be rendered capacious, it behoves you to empty it of all disorderly, evil or earthly affections. That it may be large you need to dilate your desires and longings.

APPLICATION. Perhaps you have gathered but little fruit from the many Communions which you have received up to the present time. It is because you have approached the holy table with your heart laden with ill regulated affections and desires. It was these that extinguished the desire and took away the hunger for that heavenly bread. In order then that your soul may be truly nourished at this divine table, empty your heart of earthly things and thus you will feel hunger and receive profit from your Communions.

He hath filled the hungry with good things. (Luke i, 53.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* (Ps. lxxx, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the cenacle was also itself decorated and adorned with precious vases and other objects of value. This teaches you that you should also enrich and adorn your heart with virtue, whenever you approach Holy Communion.

APPLICATION. The acts of virtue before Communion should be those of true humility and of true contrition. Consider on the one hand your vileness and your sins, and on the other hand the dignity and majesty of your divine Lord. He has been so basely offended by you, and yet He comes down from heaven with such infinite condescension and refinement of love to dwell in your heart. After Holy Communion you should adore Him with acts of divine worship, thanking Him for such goodness, and beseeching Him to help you in all your necessities. For He Who comes with such love to give you His whole being with all His treasures, cannot deny you anything you ask for the good and sanctification of your soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk: for I have lifted up my soul to thee.* (Ps. cxlii, 8.)

TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

THE PREPARATION FOR THE PASCH

You know that after two days shall be the pasch.
(Matt. xxvi, 2.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the motives which induced our Blessed Saviour to dispose that the supper of the paschal lamb should precede the Eucharistic

one. First, to intimate that as the supper of the paschal lamb was to the Hebrews the greatest solemnity and the chief mystery of the Mosaic law, so likewise the Eucharistic supper is the chief solemnity and the greatest mystery of the New law, of which the supper of the paschal lamb was but a shadow and figure. Now the Hebrews by the command of God solemnised this their mysterious supper, with much preparation, with many rites and with impressive pomp. With how much more preparation and devotion should the great mystery of the Eucharistic Supper be celebrated by the faithful of holy Church!

APPLICATION. Up to the present you have perhaps too little valued this great mystery. Begin at least now to ponder more deeply its greatness, and to practise more solid piety towards this most august Sacrament.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. . . .* (Ps. xxii, 1–5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another motive for which the paschal supper was placed first. It was because, in the same way as the Hebrew people solemnly ate the paschal lamb in memory of their liberation from the slavery of Pharaoh, so too the Eucharistic supper serves us as a memorial of our delivery from the slavery of sin, of the devil, and of hell, through the immaculate blood of Jesus.

APPLICATION. The benefit of our delivery from the slavery of sin, and the eternal death of the soul, by virtue of the divine blood of Jesus, is incomparably greater than was that of the liberation of the Hebrews

from the slavery of Pharaoh and the temporary death of the body. Hence it is right indeed that we should approach with far greater devotion and preparation to the partaking of the Eucharistic banquet.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *A memorial hath the merciful and gracious Lord made of his marvellous works. He hath given meat unto them that fear him.* (Ps. cx, 4–5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the paschal supper of the Hebrew law was celebrated once a year, because it was only once that they were liberated from the servitude of Egypt. But for us who are daily freed from our sins by virtue of the blood of the Redeemer, this sacramental feast is celebrated also daily, for it is both a remembrance of the benefit which our Lord has done us in ransoming us, and in addition a renewal of our redemption itself. Moreover the feast of the Blessed Sacrament is in reality the greatest solemnity which is celebrated during the whole year All the other principal festivities, such as those of the Nativity, the Resurrection and of the Ascension are only memorials and representations of these particular mysteries; whereas we have in the Blessed Sacrament an actual renewal of the sacred passion and death of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION. Bestow more serious reflection upon this truth, and you will both adore the Blessed Sacrament in the churches and assist at Holy Mass with greater devotion and piety. You will also make a more careful preparation, when about to approach the holy table.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My cup that inebriateth me, how goodly it is . . . that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days.* (Ps. xxii, 5, 6.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY
THE PASCHAL SUPPER AND WASHING OF THE FEET

I being your Lord and Master have washed your feet . . . I have given you an example that as I have done to you so you do also. (John xiii, 14–15.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Blessed Redeemer, before the sacramental supper, laid aside His garments and, girding Himself with a towel, filled a basin with water and kneeling on the ground even as their least servant, began to wash His disciples' feet. This He did in order to manifest to what a degree He abases Himself for us in the Blessed Sacrament. For herein He despoils Himself of all majesty, and hides Himself beneath the appearances of bread and wine. He descends from the bosom of the Father to enter the bosom of a man, to wash him with His own precious blood and to nourish him with His own sacred flesh.

APPLICATION. The astonishment and tenderness of St. Peter were so great at seeing His divine Master thus abased at his feet, that in utter amazement he exclaimed: *Thou shalt never wash my feet.* (John xiii, 8.) How much more astonishment and reverence should arise in your heart, at beholding by the light of faith Jesus in such a state of humiliation under the appearance of mere bread. He did this to wash you in His blood, and to feed you with His flesh!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God; and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul.* (Ps. lxv, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, before communicating

the apostles, Jesus wished to wash their feet to show the cleanness of soul which is needed for Holy Communion. This cleanness means complete freedom from mortal sin, and as far as may be from venial sin also and from affection to it. If then you are certain of mortal sin in your soul, it is necessary that it be cleansed in the sacrament of penance before Communion. If however you have no mortal sin upon your soul, remove also all stain of venial sin either by confession or at least by acts of contrition.

APPLICATION. Thank the good God Who has made this great Sacrament so easy of approach. Go to Holy Communion often. Such is the desire and the spirit of the Catholic Church. Frequent and even daily communion is recommended to all, as the sure and solid means of piety, virtue and increasing growth in all holiness of life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins.* (Ps. l, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that upon this occasion our Lord would teach you the need of two virtues, which are specially dear to Him. They are those of humility and of charity according to the example which Jesus has given you. *For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.* (John xiii, 15.)

APPLICATION. You also must practise these two virtues of humility and of charity towards our Blessed Lord, Who so abases Himself in order to show the extreme perfection of His charity in this most holy sacrament. Let it not be that, as Jesus enters your heart, He should have to administer to you the same reproof which He gave to the pharisee of the

gospel: *I entered thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet* (Luke vii, 44), that is to say, no salutary compunction of heart that should at one and the same time wash my feet and your own soul: *My head with oil thou didst not anoint:* that is, by pouring forth from your heart the fragrant ointment of devout affections: *Thou gavest me no kiss* (Luke vii, 44), as a sign of love and of a peace that shall never be dissolved.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How lovely are thy tabernacles! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 2, 3.)

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI
THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end. (John xiii, 1.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the intense refinement of the love of Jesus Christ in instituting the Blessed Eucharist. Firstly, it appears in the gift He makes you, in bestowing upon you under the form of the sacred species His flesh, His blood, His soul and His divinity with all the treasures of His grace. In this sacred banquet our Blessed Lord gives you all that is most precious in His divine treasury.

APPLICATION. Will you not then at least thank Him for such a gift? Do you not feel moved to love Him in return? Each little gift you receive from men as a mark of love, touches your heart and evokes a return of affection. Yet when God in the excess of His love gives you Himself, He is not able to succeed in winning your heart and obliging you to love Him in return. Do you not feel ashamed of the poor manner with which until now you have repaid the divine liberality?

Affections and resolutions. *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?* (Ps. cxv, 12.)

Consider secondly His love as seen in the perfection of the manner in which He gives Himself to you in the Holy Eucharist. He descends from the bosom of the divine Father and clothes Himself with the sacramental species in order to enter into your heart and to unite Himself to you in the form of food. Thus He joins intimately His most holy body to your flesh, and His spirit and divinity to your soul. There is nothing which can so closely become one with us as food, which when once distributed throughout our members cannot be again separated from us.

Application. How do you correspond to this intimate union invented by the love of Jesus? How far do you endeavour to remain united, with all your heart and mind, in love with Him? I fear that even during the time that He is actually within your bosom you are far from this in thought and affection.

Affections and resolutions. *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 3.)

Consider thirdly the end intended by Jesus Christ by means of this sacramental union. It is to sanctify our bodies by His most pure flesh and to sanctify our souls by His spirit and divinity. Thus animated by His spirit we live a life more divine than human, so that we may say with the Apostle: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in Me.* (Gal. ii, 20.) The alchemists of old claimed to bestow upon inferior metals the beauty and value of gold, by means of an element extracted from gold by the power of fire. Our Blessed Lord unites Himself with us in the sacramental

species by the work of His divine spirit in order to render us like unto Himself.

APPLICATION. Thank God devoutly for this excess of love and for this perfection of divine charity. But what will all these loving inventions profit you, if notwithstanding Jesus being intimately present with you, you do not endeavour to remain recollected in His divine presence? In order to enjoy the fullest fruit of this blessed union, in receiving our Lord your heart should withdraw itself from created things, and your spirit should be as it were in a state of solitude so as to give entrance to your God alone. Thus you will verify that saying of the prophet Isaias: *only in thee is God* (Isa. xlv, 14), with Jesus only in your memory, Jesus only in your intellect, and Jesus only in your will.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art great, O Lord, and doest wondrous things; I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart.* (Ps. lxxxv, 10–12.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Jesus knowing that his hour was come. (John xiii, 1.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how greatly this wondrous mystery of the Blessed Eucharist is enhanced by the circumstances under which it was instituted by our Blessed Lord. Knowing that the hour had come for Him to leave His disciples, He wished to complete the work of our salvation, by supplying in His sacramental presence for the loss of His visible presence. He had descended to earth and clothed Himself in human flesh without leaving His Father; so without leaving the disciples He would now return

to the Father. He showed thus how strongly bound in love He was to the disciples, from whom He could not and would not separate Himself even in death. *My delights were to be with the children of men.* (Prov. viii, 31.)

APPLICATION. Jesus does not wish to separate Himself from men were it even for a moment. How is it then that you are so little solicitous to hasten to where He awaits you in the Blessed Sacrament? There He offers Himself as your guide, your physician, your comforter and your strength. *Come to me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* (Matt. xi, 28.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles.* (Ps. xlv, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another great marvel regarding the time in which the Blessed Eucharist was instituted as thus noted by the Apostle: *In the same night that he was betrayed.* (1 Cor. xi, 23.) So it was that He wished to compensate an excess of perfidy by an excess of charity, and to render His bounty more luminous amidst the darkness of human wickedness. *The light shineth in darkness.* (St. John i, 5.)

APPLICATION. Is it not a thing to astound any mind to behold our Lord securing, by such wonderful prodigies on that night, still to remain in the world among men whilst they were actually plotting to drive Him from it, and to prepare, as He did, a banquet of heavenly delights for His disciples that same night in which He was to be betrayed by one of them, denied by another, forsaken by all and left in the hands of His enemies? From such examples of perfect charity will you not learn to return good for evil, and to love those who hate you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.* (Ps. xx, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus in instituting the most divine Sacrament, foresaw that this excess of love towards us on His part would be met by an excess of outrage on ours. By unbelievers His sacred body has been trampled under foot, and insulted in many most unworthy ways. What is still worse is that, even by the faithful who believe in His real presence in the sacred host, He is left alone and neglected on His altars. He is insulted by innumerable irreverences, and also sacrilegiously received into many hearts that are stained by grievous sins. And notwithstanding all this, Jesus Christ did not cease to make His excess of love and invincible patience shine forth amid so much darkness. *He shall entertain and feed, and give drink to the unthankful, and moreover He shall hear bitter words.* (Ecclus. xxix, 31.)

APPLICATION. If Jesus Christ for your salvation abased Himself so far as to bear such injuries in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, why should you not also bear willingly some affronts for His glory? Why not try on your part to make up to Him for the outrages He suffers from the greater part of mankind. Frequent visits of adoration will only cost you a few moments. Humble your spirit in His sacred presence, and bow down to adore Him and give Him a complete worship by exterior and interior acts.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will come into thy house; I will worship towards thy holy temple, in thy fear. Conduct me, O Lord, in thy justice: because of my enemies, direct my way in thy sight.* (Ps. v, 8, 9.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

THE ACTIVE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world. (Matt. xxviii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus dwelling in the Blessed Sacrament endeavours to renew for our advantage those benefits which He wrought upon earth by His visible presence, enlightening our minds, healing our infirmities and strengthening us in the practice of virtue. Firstly, He would enlighten and instruct us by remaining in the tabernacle. *He will not cause thy teacher to flee away from thee any more.* (Isa. xxx, 20.) And what truths profitable to your salvation are there that Jesus does not teach you? He sends from His sacred Host rays of light to illuminate your mind, and by interior inspirations to instruct your heart. *I will speak to her heart.* (Osee ii, 14). St. Thomas Aquinas learned more by devoutly remaining before the Blessed Sacrament than by reading the most learned volumes: *and they that approach to his feet, shall receive of his doctrine.* (Deut. xxxiii, 3.)

APPLICATION. What a happiness therefore is yours in being able at any hour to hear such a teacher! But how far are you anxious to learn this heavenly doctrine? And in order that you may receive instruction it suffices not that you be present in body only, but you must approach our Blessed Lord in spirit also. Place yourself like Magdalen at His sacred feet and hear His voice and His teaching.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come ye to him and be enlightened.* (Ps. xxxiii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ remains on the altar to heal you even as the bronze serpent raised up by Moses healed the Jews who had been bitten by serpents: *which when they that were bitten looked upon, they were healed.* (Num. xxi, 9.) During the time that our Blessed Redeemer was visibly present on earth He continually wrought wonderful miracles, for the good of those who were suffering from divers diseases of the body. But still more frequently now does Jesus, veiled under the sacramental species, work greater miracles of grace in favour of those souls who have devout recourse to Him.

APPLICATION. How many in fact there are who having recourse to the Blessed Sacrament are healed of the evil infirmity of their souls! See then whether you fail to cure completely the evils of your soul, because you neglect to have the same recourse to Jesus, Who alone can give you health.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Say to my soul: I am thy salvation.* (Ps. xxxiv, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus remains on the altar also, in order by His example to animate and strengthen you in the acquisition of virtue. For there He recalls to your mind the virtues practised by Him during His mortal life. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is a memorial of all He wrought and suffered for you, and therefore it is called by St. Augustine: *A Sacred Memorial.* This memorial being, as it really is, living and animated infuses into the soul strength and vigour to follow in His divine footsteps. But still more does Jesus strengthen and animate you, by the examples of virtue which He actually presents to you under the sacramental species, namely of obedience in descending from heaven at the voice of the priest;

of humility and of patience in remaining thus hidden under the accidents of bread and wine, and so subjecting Himself to many irreverences and insults for your sake.

APPLICATION. Place yourself in the presence of Jesus and diligently consider both the virtues which He displayed during His lifetime, and also those which He is now actually exercising in the Blessed Sacrament. Picture to yourself the Eternal Father saying to you from the tabernacle: *Look and make it according to the pattern.* (Exod. xxv, 40.) In this way you will animate yourself to practise the virtues there taught you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul.* (Ps. lxv, 16.)

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE

Do this for a commemoration of me. (Luke xxii, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus comes to us under the sacramental species, not only to dwell with us, but also that He may offer Himself for us as an unbloody victim in the sacrifice of the Mass. Here the sacrifice of Calvary is daily renewed in order that we may understand how greatly He desires that we remember His death on the cross for us. The sacrifice and death on the cross is represented in the Mass in various ways. It is represented mystically by all the divine blood being placed separately under the species of wine, and the divine Body under the species of bread. It is represented morally by the body of Christ remaining under the form of the accidents in a state as it were of death.

APPLICATION. May it not possibly happen that you assist at this representation of the death of the Son of God for you, with less attention and with less affection than you would at the representation of some imaginary tragedy upon a stage?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will give praise to thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: I will relate all thy wonders.* (Ps. ix, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in the sacrifice of the Mass the sacrifice offered on Calvary to the divine Father is not only represented but is moreover renewed, and is as pleasing to Him as was the sacrifice of the cross. In the Mass the same victim is offered as was offered on Calvary. The Priest Who offers it is the same, for it is offered by Jesus Christ Himself. He offers it to His divine Father for the same end, and with the same love, as when He offered the first sacrifice. This renewal of the sacrifice of the cross which is daily made on our altars was left to us by Jesus Christ, in order that we might be able thereby to render daily to God the service we owe Him. We must honour Him, and for that end the Mass serves, inasmuch as it is truly a holocaust. We must appease God for our sins; for this the Mass also serves as a propitiatory sacrifice. We must thank Him for benefits received and also beg those we stand in need of, and for this the Mass serves as a sacrifice of reconciliation. Oh what a great mystery there is in all this!

APPLICATION. In assisting at Holy Mass endeavour to offer and direct It for the ends and intentions, of honouring the divine Majesty, of making satisfaction, of thanking and of supplicating Him. If you will unite this your offering with that which Jesus makes in the Mass as the chief high priest, it will

be more acceptable to God and more beneficial to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS *Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole burnt offerings.* (Ps. l, 21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the holy sacrifice of the Mass is not less profitable to us than that of the cross. The sacrifice of Calvary was the universal cause, by which all the treasures of the merits of Christ were amassed on behalf of all mankind. The sacrifice of the Mass applies and dispenses this treasure for the benefit of each soul in particular, by giving to each a part in proportion to the disposition and co-operation to be found in it.

APPLICATION. When you consider that in Holy Mass there is a treasure of such infinite value offered by Jesus Christ to enrich you with, can you bring yourself to pass it by? Rather ponder with deep gratitude the greatness of the mystery, and excite within you those acts of piety and of religion, which are necessarily requisite in order to render this divine sacrifice profitable unto you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me; and there is the way by which I will shew him the salvation of God.* (Ps. xlix, 23.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AS A SACRAMENT

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. (John vi, 57.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in the same way as our most loving Redeemer wished in the Mass to make a renewal of the sacrifice of the cross, so likewise

in Holy Communion He would make an extension of the mystery of the divine Incarnation. By this sacramental union He would give to him who worthily communicates those immense benefits, which His most holy Humanity enjoyed by personal union with the Divine Word. Consider what honour and dignity it was for Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He was Man, to be raised to intimate companionship with the divinity. Yet He would not rejoice in these prerogatives for Himself alone. He desires that we also should in some degree participate in them by means of Holy Communion. *And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them.* (John xvii, 22.) These words Jesus said in the cenacle to His Divine Father after having given Holy Communion to the disciples, thereby signifying that He made His disciples partakers of that glory which He had received by union with the Word, in giving them sacramentally His body and blood.

APPLICATION. Oh liberality of Jesus! As you ponder such divine favours from our Blessed Lord, fail not to thank Him intensely and strive more and more to appreciate this supreme mystery.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast made him a little less than the angels: thou hast crowned him with glory and honour.* (Ps. viii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this sacramental union, although inferior to the substantial union existing between the divine Word and the humanity of Christ, is none the less the closest and most intimate which we can have in this life. For therein is to be found a union with Christ which is corporal, spiritual, and moral. First a corporal union; it unites us by a physical contact with His most pure flesh which

sanctifies our bodies. A spiritual union; for it unites us to the divinity which is intimately joined with the humanity of Christ. A moral union, as it makes us mystical members of the body of Jésus, animated by His divine spirit and raised to a divine life: *He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.* (1 Cor. vi, 17.) This divine life, which the sacramental union infuses into us, our Blessed Lord made known to us when He said: *I live by the Father: so he that eateth me shall live by me.* (John vi, 58.)

APPLICATION. Can we realise this and believe that Jesus is so intimately united to us, and yet live with our thoughts and affections so far removed from Him? Let us rather exclaim with the Apostle: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii, 20.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What have I in heaven? And besides thee what do I desire upon earth?* (Ps. lxxii, 25.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the sacramental union with Christ is called communion, because by means of it He communicates to us all the treasures of His merits and of the satisfaction which He won for us. There is no other limit to this communication than that of our own dispositions and capacity. *In all things you are made rich in him* (1 Cor. i, 5.) And thus it is that we enter into the possession of all the riches which Jesus possesses in His sacred humanity. In giving us Jesus Christ, the Father *hath with him given us all things.* (Rom. viii, 32.) Hence likewise Christ in giving us Himself in Holy Communion gives us also all His gifts.

APPLICATION. Ask yourself what fruit you have brought forth after so many Communions. One single Communion would suffice to make a saint, and

yet so many Communions have not yet sufficed to make you live as becomes a fervent follower of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land: and thou shalt be fed with its riches.* (Ps. xxxvi, 3.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

EFFECTS OF HOLY COMMUNION

My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. (John vi, 56.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Holy Communion serves us as a medicine, a weapon and our strength. It serves as a medicine to cure the diseases of our unruly passions, which we have contracted with the infected nature of our first parent. Jesus Christ comes to us in Holy Communion to heal these diseases by the most intimate union of His divine flesh with us in the form of food. Hence as by our union with the flesh of Adam, the transgressor, we have contracted our infirmities, so by union with the flesh of Christ the Redeemer, we receive the remedy and their most efficacious cure.

APPLICATION. Conclude therefore that when you feel your passions most tumultuous and most rebellious, it is then that you must have more frequent and devout recourse to Jesus in Holy Communion, which is the most universal means to heal all the diseases of the soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!* (Ps. xxii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Holy Communion is the best weapon we have against the assaults of the devil, as having a special power to put the infernal spirits to flight and to vanquish them. It was foreshadowed in Gideon's bread which overthrew the army of the Madianites. If we are fortified with this heavenly food we can never be vanquished by the attacks of the demons, who are fearful of him with whom Jesus is present and Who even after the sacred species has disappeared, does not cease to defend him with His loving providence. If the sign of the cross serves to put to flight the infernal spirits, how much more Jesus in person. *If God be for us who is against us?* (Rom. viii, 31.)

APPLICATION. Often receive Holy Communion and strive to remain firmly united with Jesus. Thus shall you be victorious over all the enemies of your soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, remove not thy help far from me, look towards my defence.* (Ps. xxi, 20.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Holy Communion gives us strength to work and suffer for God. It invigorates us more efficaciously than the unleavened bread, which God gave to Elias whereby to journey for forty days and to ascend the Mount of Horeb. In the pilgrimage of this earthly life you also lack the strength to climb the summit of virtue and to overcome the obstacles of your corrupt nature. Behold then how Jesus prepares for you the table of His most sacred body to succour your weakness, to animate you in overcoming your difficulties and to fill your heart with a generous spirit, so that you may run in the way of virtue.

APPLICATION. May you also know how to avail yourself of this sacred banquet whereby to cure your infirmities, to arm yourself against your enemies and to remedy your weakness.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath led me on the paths of justice ; though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils.* (Ps. xxii, 3, 4.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE HOLY EUCHARIST OUR FOOD

This is the bread that came down from heaven . . . He that eateth this bread shall live for ever. (John vi, 59.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Holy Eucharist alone of all the sacraments is given to us in the form of food. The other sacraments are like so many channels by which a measure of sanctifying grace is communicated to us, but the blessed sacrament of the altar gives us the source itself of all grace. Nor indeed could this gift of God be given us in a better manner than in the form of food, to denote that closest union which Jesus Christ desired between Himself and us.

APPLICATION. When thus you see Jesus Christ your God, your Creator and your Redeemer coming into your bosom and giving you the complete possession and gift of Himself, will you not once for all let Him also take full possession of you, placing yourself entirely in His divine hands, so that He may dispose of you with perfect liberty.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them the bread of heaven.* (Ps. lxxvii, 23, 24.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this sacrament is given to us in the form of food, to denote that it produces in the soul the effects that material food produces in the body. For the sacraments are at the same time signs and causes which operate that which they signify. Hence if it be the property of material food to maintain and increase the life of the body, so it is likewise the function of this spiritual food to maintain and increase the life of the soul. There is however this difference. Material food serves to maintain the life of the body up to a certain point only and to keep death in check for a short time only. The eucharistic food, on the other hand, serves to increase the life of the soul without limit and to render it immortal. It is called the *Bread of life*, because it bestows all the benefits of life, giving the life of grace, the life of glory, and on the last day it will give the life of immortality to the body also.

APPLICATION. Are not all these gifts sufficient to awaken in you an insatiable hunger for this divine food? But observe here that as material food avails but little to increase and maintain life if the body be not duly disposed, so is it with the eucharistic food. You have received Holy Communion many times and it has perhaps borne but little fruit in your soul, and this because you have partaken of this heavenly bread without disposing your soul by holy reflection, and possibly with your soul infected by sin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man ate the bread of angels: he sent them food in abundance.* (Ps. lxxvii, 25.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the eucharistic banquet was instituted by Jesus Christ under the species of bread and wine, to denote that He gives you a complete refection for your spirit just as bread and wine form

a complete refection for the body. Of what can one have need who is fed by God Himself, the source and origin of all good things? *A soul that is full shall tread upon the honeycomb.* (Prov. xxvii, 7.) A heart that is filled by God, cannot but despise all the miserable pleasures that the goods of this world can give. All the other gifts that we receive from the divine liberality are less than God Himself, neither can we in them rejoice as fully as in God. Only at the Eucharistic table do we rejoice in God Himself, Who becomes for us there our true food and our true drink.

APPLICATION. Ought not this truth to extinguish in you all hunger and thirst for earthly things? *For what is the good thing of him and what is his beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins?* (Zach. ix, 17.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What have I in heaven? And besides thee what do I desire upon earth?* (Ps. lxxii, 25.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE HOLY EUCHARIST A PLEDGE OF FUTURE GLORY

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (John vi, 55.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that of him who is nourished by the sacramental body of Jesus it is not said that he *shall* have everlasting life, but that he *hath everlasting life.* For in giving us Himself as our food our Blessed Lord gives us so sure a pledge of future glory that it is equivalent to the actual possession of it.

Moreover this pledge which we hold in security is of no less value than the good itself which we hope for. Who could ever doubt the promises of One Who should leave no other than Himself as a surety for them ?

APPLICATION. Can you doubt the promises of a God Who gives you Himself in the Blessed Sacrament as a pledge of the glory to come ? Each time you communicate say with all your heart : Be thou, my God the sustainer of my hope, Who by coming on earth to dwell humbly in my bosom, givest me a sure confidence that one day Thou wilt receive me into Thy bosom in glory. *Let him hope in the name of the Lord and lean upon his God.* (Isa. l, 10.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my refuge : and my God the help of my hope.* (Ps. xciii, 22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is a pledge, and *the pledge of future glory*. He is a pledge which at the same time helps and facilitates for you the acquisition of the life of glory. For He gives you aid to repress concupiscence, to resist temptation and to do all that is necessary on your part to merit that glory. The primary end which He had in instituting this divine sacrament was to serve you as food for the journey which leads you to eternal rest.

APPLICATION. Every time therefore that you communicate dispose yourself to receive Jesus by way of *viaticum*, as if it were for the very last time, and as if you were about to depart this life. If you do so, with the intention of fulfilling the desire of communicating at the last moment of your life, you will reap the benefit of it, even though you should be hindered by a sudden death from receiving Holy Communion in that hour.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff : they have comforted me.* (Ps. xxii, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in Holy Communion the words of our Lord as recorded by St. Luke are verified : *Lo, the kingdom of God is within you.* (Luke xvii, 21.) For we receive within us all that constitutes the blessedness of the citizens of heaven, and are given at the sacramental table the very food which is the delight of the angelic spirits. The only difference is that the blessed intelligences feed on God in the light of glory, and we in the light of faith. The blessed are present at the banquet with the fulness of delight, we with an increase of grace and of merit.

APPLICATION. For this food then which satisfies all heaven do you not feel an insatiable and continual hunger ? The blessed never suffer any separation whatever from the supreme Good Whom they enjoy in the light of glory. You also should never be separated from the supreme Good Whom you likewise enjoy by the light of faith. You should always live united to Him by love and by frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, by a loving remembrance of Him and by sacramental and spiritual communions, saying with the apostle : *It is good for us to be here.* (Matt. xvii, 4.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them the bread of heaven.* (Ps. lxxvii, 24.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

Conformity to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

If any man enter in he shall be saved; and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures. (John x, 9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the most sure sign of your spiritual progress is that you be more and more conformed to Jesus Christ, even as a copy is to its original. *Whom God foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His son.* (Rom. viii, 29.) As then the adopted sons must hereafter in heaven be conformed to the image of their glorious eldest brother, so likewise should they also be conformed to their suffering model on their way thither: *As we have borne the image of the earthly let us also bear the image of the heavenly.* (1 Cor. xv, 49.) Hence according to the degree of conformity which we shall have with Christ on earth, will correspond the degree of conformity which we shall have with Him in heaven.

APPLICATION. And how better attain to this life-giving conformity than by entering into the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ Himself. *If any man enter in he shall be saved.* There we shall come to a more perfect knowledge of Himself, His virtues, His intentions and desires. To open the door to us, Jesus would have His sacred side pierced by a lance.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *This is the gate of the Lord, the just shall enter into it; thou art become my salvation.* (Ps. ciii, 23.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that God wished Christ to be *the firstborn among many brethren.* Hence He could not make us His adopted sons and partakers of the glory of paradise, except by giving it to us as a reward of our conformity with His firstborn, with His life and His sufferings. Hence it is that in the path of our Christian life thorns and crosses are to be met with everywhere, but all are made sweet by the love and the grace of our elder-brother. In fact, it is more in the power of each one, and far easier, to become poor like Christ than to abound in riches, to humble oneself than to command, to obey than to govern, and so of all the rest.

APPLICATION. So, too, as Jesus Christ quitted the bosom of His Father without ceasing to be united to Him in order to find treasures unknown even in heaven, let us also go out to find in practice the virtues we have contemplated in that Human Heart, yet always united and trusting to It.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labour till evening.* (Ps. ciii, 23.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that to strengthen your resolve to acquire more perfectly this resemblance, return often to this loving Heart, there to find pastures in the consideration of the examples which Jesus has left you of poverty, humility, obedience, and meekness. Observe well the difference there is between your true model and the copy presented perhaps by your own soul.

APPLICATION. It is only in this constant entering in and going out on our part that we shall find in that Sacred Heart those pastures of peace to our soul, refreshment in our labours, alleviation of our burden

which Jesus Christ has so solemnly promised to those who will come to Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Trust in him, pour out your hearts before him ; God is our helper for ever.* (Ps. lxi, 9.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST

If any one love me, he will keep my word. (John xiv, 23.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the words and precepts of Christ are like those simple herbs of the earth which are endowed with marvellous virtue, but which the ignorant shepherd thinks unworthy even of a glance. He carelessly treads them under foot; whereas an expert seeks and collects them diligently, preserving them with the utmost care in order to make use of them to the profit of many. And the same happens with regard to the precepts of the gospel. He who knows not their marvellous virtue makes little account of them, whereas he who understands them well considers them carefully, stores them up and keeps them.

APPLICATION. If there were to be found a herb that had power to keep death far from you for many centuries, would you not study to search it out ? Would you not carefully preserve it ? With how much more care and industry ought you not to preserve the words and precepts of Jesus Christ, which have the virtue of keeping you safe from death and that through all eternity ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How sweet are thy words to my palate ! More than honey to my mouth.* (Ps. cxviii, 103.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how it is that the precepts of Christ possess such virtue. We are subject to a double death, the death of the body and the death of the soul. As to the death of the body, he who keeps the precepts of the Lord *shall not see death for ever.* (John viii, 51.) Not indeed because he does not die once for all in this world, but because after death he is destined to live a far more excellent life in heaven. Thus it is he will not see death in eternity, as alas! the souls that are lost will, who live a life of torment which is rather a living death. As to the death of the soul, which is mortal sin, he who observes the precepts of our Lord *shall not see death.* For he who lives according to the teaching of our Lord, shall never lose the life of grace : *Keep my commandments and thou shalt live.* (Prov. vii, 2.) It is either by the disorder of internal passions, or through the dangers of evil occasions, or by the assaults of diabolical temptations, or through all these three things together, that the life of grace is lost. Now the precepts of our Lord have especial power to regulate our passions, to preserve from the danger of occasions, and to repel assaults of temptation.

APPLICATION. Consequently see how great their value is and how you ought to prize them : *My son, hearken to my words ; for they are life to those that find them.* (Prov. iv, 20, 22.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *By thy commandments I have had understanding : therefore have I hated every way of iniquity. Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths.* (Ps. cxviii, 104, 105.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how you should keep these divine precepts to your own great advantage. You must keep them in your heart, in your words and in your works. In your heart, by meditating on them

from time to time, loving them with the affection of your will, and recalling them often to your memory most especially when you are in danger of sin. In your words, showing that you value them by gladly speaking of them and never being ashamed openly to profess them. In your works, by fidelity in keeping them in the various duties of your state of life.

APPLICATION. Does it seem to you that this is too much to ask? Reflect that the fruit will be very great indeed. For it is the fruit of life, of the words of life and of life eternal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will be mindful of thy wonders from the beginning, and I will meditate on all thy works.* (Ps. lxxvi, 12, 13.)

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

(Read Luke xv, 1–10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that you are this lost sheep of the gospel. The divine Shepherd has sought you with much labour and toil, has brought you back to the fold, and has placed you in safety. For often in the past you have alas! gone far from your Shepherd, walking amidst a thousand perils into which you fell and were lost. Then our Blessed Saviour leaving so many others amid the dangers that surrounded them also, sought you out especially and strove with much love and much care to lead you back into the way of salvation.

APPLICATION. Strive to recognise the great benefit which our Lord has done to you, and thank Him with all your heart. If you have served Him badly in the past, resolve now to begin a new life and to be more generous for the future.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have gone astray*

like a sheep that is lost : seek thy servant, because I have not forgotten thy commandments. (Ps. cxviii, 176.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY all that it cost our Lord to withdraw you from the path of sin and to bring you to a life of virtue. How many inspirations has He whispered in your heart which you have neglected, how many lights has He given you, and how many impulses has He not employed, to which you have made a long resistance. In the meantime in His love He did not cease to repeat His invitations and to multiply His graces. But in order to merit these inspirations and graces for you, what labours, what afflictions and what torments did He not suffer for you, all through His life and in His death ? All that He did and suffered for the whole world, He did and suffered for your salvation in particular, as if there had been no one else in the world to save. *He loved me, and delivered Himself for me.* (Gal. ii, 20.)

APPLICATION. It is thus that He may be truly said to have carried you upon His own shoulders. Neither was Jesus induced to show this special love towards you because He had any need of you, but only because you had the utmost need of this His special love. And to so great mercy and such great love how far have you corresponded up till now ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast conducted thy people like sheep.* (Ps. lxxvi, 21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that we read of the shepherd of the gospel that he received congratulations when he brought back the lost sheep in the fold. So too do all the angels rejoice with Christ our Lord, when they see a soul raised again to life from sin and rescued from the danger of perishing. In your case too there is great joy in heaven at seeing you come forth from sin and

begin a new life in the service of God. Beware however lest this joy be turned into mourning: *My harp is turned to mourning* (Job xxx, 31), at seeing that you again serve the world rather than God.

APPLICATION. If you desire that this joy over your return should continue in heaven, resolve to set yourself earnestly to acquire those virtues that belong to your state of life, to correct your faults and your defects. Thus will you give complete joy to Christ and to all the court of heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.)

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RIGHT INTENTION IN OUR ACTIONS

Take heed that you do not your justice before man, to be seen by them. (Matt. vi, 1.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that by justice is meant all good works, which may be reduced to three kinds: fasting, under which are comprised all the penitential works which render us just in the sight of God; almsgiving, which includes all the works of charity, which make us just towards our neighbour; and prayer, which comprehends all the works of religion, which regulate our conduct in regard to God.

APPLICATION. Now God so wills that all these works of virtue and merit be seen in order that a good example be thereby given. However He wills not that you do them that you may gain the praise of men, *to be seen of men.* Reflect on what your intention is in doing these works.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have kept thy commandments and thy testimonies: because all my ways are in thy sight.* (Ps. cxviii, 168.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that there are two sorts of good works: some ordinary, such as belong to your state of life, others particular and out of the ordinary. These latter are safer and more solid when you perform them in secret, so as to fly the notice and praise of men. To your ordinary works however, on the contrary, you must give that publicity which all good servants of God observe, that thereby He may be praised.

APPLICATION. How easy however it is for you often to neglect them, not in order to avoid vain-glory, but because of your carelessness and the love of your own ease and convenience! Beware of such neglect.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have sworn, and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 106.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how important it is for you to have this right intention in all your actions. Every act of vanity that influences you to do your good actions deprives you of their merit. For then your reward for them will be the praise of men on earth, which you have valued more than the good pleasure of God. Thus they will gain you nothing from God or for eternity. Observe, nevertheless, that every act of vanity does not always rob you of your whole merit before God. Only that act of vanity which precedes the action and which has for its end to please men alone, is a worm that vitiates the entire good work. An act of vanity however which in part accompanies the good work, or follows it, does not entirely spoil it, although it be blameworthy and perhaps sinful.

APPLICATION. Consider therefore how important

it is that you direct your intention aright at the beginning of your works. Always strive to do them not to please men, but solely in order to please God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *That I should do thy will : O, my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.* (Ps. xxxix, 9.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LIFE A TIME FOR REPENTANCE

Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt. iii, 2.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what a benefit it is that God, Who is the Lord of infinite majesty and grievously offended by man, a vile worm of the earth, should still give him, not from any obligation but out of pure goodness, opportunity of repentance and of returning to His favour : *He hath given him place for penance* (Job xxiv, 23.) Nay He gives him not only time but also light, and inspirations and helps. Yet man abuses even this, and avails himself of it only to sin more boldly.

APPLICATION. But how far greater a benefit it is, that you, who have offended your God so many times, should by His pure mercy have been spared so long and been so specially blest, in order that you might have more time and better means of repentance and amendment. Nevertheless you have abused all this by increasing your sins and by your ingratitude. Admire our Blessed Lord's great bounty towards you, thank Him for it, and deplore your ingratitude.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath not dealt with us according to our sins : nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* (Ps. cii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the sinner misapplies the time given to him by God. For it seems to him that he has not committed any great evil, seeing that God did not immediately punish him, but allowed him still to enjoy life and prosperity. If however Almighty God had promptly punished him for his sins, oh how he would then have humbled himself: *For because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the children of men commit evils without any fear.* (Eccles. viii, 11.)

APPLICATION. And would you also desire to be numbered among those who abuse the long-suffering and patience which God shows in bearing with your sins? If God, instead of calling you in His mercy to do penance for them, had cast you into hell which you have so many times deserved, then would you have understood the greatness of your offences. Then all in vain would you have detested your folly in the midst of those devouring flames. How is it now that you so badly correspond to and so greatly abuse His excessive mercy? What penance have you done up to this moment in proportion to your sins? Nay, rather how burdensome does it perhaps seem to you to live according to the commandments of God and of His holy Church!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me: that I may learn thy justifications.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the sinner presumes that he will have time to set all things right at the last. For as he sees that God has borne with him so long, he rashly counts on having time and opportunity later on to attend to the affair of his salvation. But how many has not this false hope deceived? How many thus

die evil deaths in consequence and are lost for ever ?

Application. Consider therefore seriously the end for which God has given you these years of life. It is none other than as a time of penance. Therefore humble yourself before God. Beware of abusing it, because this would be to do a great wrong to God and to bring immense misery upon yourself.

Affections and resolutions. *I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.* (Ps. l, 5.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REMEMBRANCE OF THE FOUR LAST THINGS

The son of man will render to every man according to his works. (Matt. xvi, 27.)

Consider firstly how all important it is never to sin mortally, and how constantly the saints besieged heaven with most fervent prayers in order to obtain this grace, which is also within your reach provided you resolve in all you do to remember your last end. But the thought of death, which is the first of the last things, will not suffice without that of the judgment to follow. For the thought of death alone has served many an impious man to give himself up all the more to the enjoyment of life upon earth : *Our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud : come therefore let us enjoy the good things that are present.* (Wis. ii, 5, 6.)

Application. In order then that the thought of death may be profitable to you, you must needs recall to mind that after death follows a severe judgment. To that judgment will be affixed the awarding either

of eternal punishment or of eternal reward. Herein lies an efficacious power to restrain you from all sin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* (Ps. cxlii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this great power is born also of the remembrance of all the four last things, namely, death, judgment, hell and heaven. This remembrance will cause the four cardinal virtues to live in you and to guide you. Prudence will govern your reason that it may be truly wise; justice your will that it may be directed aright; temperance your desires and affections that you may reject the pleasures of sin; fortitude your passions that you may overcome the difficulty of virtue. Now the remembrance of the last four things does more than anything else to make these virtues live in you. The remembrance of death dissipates from your head those vapours of ambition and of pride, which cloud the intellect, and so gives you prudence. The remembrance of the judgment places before your mind that rigorous judge Who will pass in review your state of soul, and so increases your justice. The remembrance of hell restrains within you the craving for those pleasures which must end in such dire punishment, and this will give you temperance. The remembrance of paradise lessens the dread of the evils of this life which will be changed into eternal joys, and this will give you fortitude.

APPLICATION. How then can it be possible that you should ever sin? *In all thy works*, says Ecclesiasticus, *remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin.* (Ecclus. vii, 40.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff : they have comforted me.* (Ps. xxii, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this promise of the sacred writer about the remembrance of our last end is of no effect in many souls, because they think of the four last things in the abstract only. They do not think of the last things as of something that concerns themselves. Therefore it is said, *remember thy last end.* We must therefore remind ourselves that it is precisely we who in a short time shall be carried to the coffin and to the grave. This tremendous judgment is for me. These eternal punishments are for me, if I give way to temptation. For me are these heavenly rewards if I resist.

APPLICATION. This remembrance must needs be put into practice : *In all thy works remember.* It is of little worth to have beautiful thoughts about the four last things. These mere imaginations are lifeless things. It is necessary that you make them live in your acts and works. Then this remembrance, which may now seem to you somewhat bitter, will hereafter be turned into sweetness. For it will keep your conscience good, and that is the chief joy of all. *There is no pleasure above the joy of the heart.* (Ecclus. xxx, 16.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I remembered, O Lord, thy judgments of old, and I was comforted.* (Ps. cxviii, 52.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOD'S HATRED OF SIN

Jesus therefore said to them : Which of you shall convince me of sin? (John viii, 46.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the hatred which God bears to sin is equal to the love He must bear towards Himself, that is to say, immense, infinite, essential. This is the reason He has always pursued sin with many punishments, such as the flood, showers of fire, pestilences, earthquakes and other numberless sufferings. But this was little. To show the hatred He bears to sin, it was necessary for God to create hell, and even after millions of centuries it could not be said that He had received sufficient satisfaction from the sinner in that horrible abyss. In order to demonstrate this intense hatred and to cause full satisfaction to be made to Himself for it, He went to the extent of punishing sin in the person of His own Son, Who in Himself had nothing of sin but its appearance and resemblance. He delivered Him up to the death of the cross.

APPLICATION. By such considerations may we also arrive at some conception of God's intense hatred of sin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity : therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* (Ps. xliv, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that all the love which God bears to all the good works that have ever been done by all His creatures, by all the patriarchs and prophets and martyrs, if placed in the balance would not outweigh the hatred that God bears to one single sin of

yours. Therefore if it were possible for God to feel afflicted, He would be more grieved at your sin than He would be rejoiced at all the united good works of the saints, although these be otherwise most excellent. Consequently in order to obtain these good works, He could never will a single sin to be committed, however small it might be. He can permit you to commit it; but He cannot will that you should commit it.

APPLICATION. If then by telling a lie it would be possible to obtain through your means the conversion of all men to the faith, you would not be justified in telling it. Oh how great then must be this hatred of God for sin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have hated and abhorred iniquity; but I have loved thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 163.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in the same degree in which God hates sin, He likewise hates you if you are a sinner: *But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike.* (Wisd. xiv, 9.) God hates nothing among all His creatures but sin. What immense misery you would esteem it were you to become an object of hatred to all your city? And is it not worse for you to be hated by God and by all the inhabitants of heaven? There is however this great difference between the hatred which God bears to sin and that which He bears the sinner. Sin itself must be always hated by God, whereas the sinner, if he only wills it, can cease to be a sinner by hating and by detesting from his heart the sin he has committed.

APPLICATION. Begin to make war against your rebellious nature, and against your ill-regulated desires, by mortifying them. In this way will you cease to sin and God will begin to love you. If you have

already had the grace through the divine mercy to leave the state of sin, do not cease to thank God and to make satisfaction for the debt of your sins. Remember always, wheresoever you may be, that you are no more secure from falling than was Adam in his state of innocence, nor Lucifer in heaven itself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I was directed to all thy commandments: I have hated all wicked ways.* (Ps. cxviii, 128.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

MORTIFICATION

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. (Luke ix, 23.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the sign of being very pleasing to Christ is not that of being a worker of miracles, a great preacher, or a good teacher of the true faith, but that of being greatly mortified. And this all may with God's grace attain to, provided they efficaciously desire it. This mortification is called crucifixion: *They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh* (Gal. v, 24), because it is to be done for the love of the Crucified One and in order to become more like Him. Moreover, it must be attended with sorrow and constancy as that of Jesus crucified was. For He remained immovably fixed to the cross in extreme agony until He expired.

APPLICATION. Consider whether your mortification seems to you at all like that, or whether it be not inconstant, and a thing you try to avoid as much as possible. The less you love mortification the less will you be dear to Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My tears have been*

my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God? (Ps. xli, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you should in the first place mortify your flesh in order to attack the very root of the evil. It is from the flesh that comes all the evil which the soul suffers, and therefore it is necessary to begin the remedy by subduing the flesh. Do you think of subduing the flesh or rather of caressing it?

APPLICATION. Exterior mortification, though necessary, does not alone suffice. Of what use is it to remove the cause of the fever, if at the same time the fever itself is not allayed? Therefore to exterior mortification you must join the interior; or rather you must practise exterior mortification in order to acquire the interior, which is the more important.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How long wilt thou feed us with the bread of tears, and give us for our drink tears in measure?* (Ps. lxxix, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what are precisely those things which you should conquer by means of interior mortification. They are the *vices*, as St. Paul says, that is our sins; and the *concupiscences*, namely our passions. We must first attack our sins, and cleanse our soul, and then our passions by bringing them into subjection.

APPLICATION. What are the passions that most reign in you? Make an effort to know them in order to mortify them, so that if they live, at least they live only on the cross. Our vices are not so much our actual sins as our habitual ones. Strive therefore by mortification to reach the degree, as far as possible, of not committing habitual sin. One may easily with God's help succeed in ridding himself of all habitual sin. Therefore the habitual sins are those

which you must more particularly mortify, be they small or great, not being content with their merely being upon the cross but determined that they should actually die there. And to this also you can attain by the divine mercy if you really wish to mortify them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My iniquities are multiplied above the hairs of my head : and my heart hath forsaken me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me, look down, O Lord, to help me.* (Ps. xxxix, 13, 14.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SENTENCE ON THE REPROBATE

Then shall he say to them also that shall be on his left hand : Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. (Matt. xxv, 41.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that all the sufferings of sickness, of afflictions, of adversities, which come to you on this earth from the hand of the Lord, are as it were so many arrows sent from heaven either to punish or to prove you, sharp arrows which penetrate but which finally pass away. *Thy arrows pass*, says the Psalmist, *the voice of thy thunder in a wheel.* (Ps. lxxvi, 19.) What however will that be that will never pass away ? It will be that terrible voice, as it were of thunder, in the ears of sinners on the last day, with which Christ will drive them away from Him saying : *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire.* (Matt. xxv, 41.) And this voice on the wheel of eternity will with perpetual movement resound eternally in the ears of the reprobate, and afflict and torment them for evermore.

APPLICATION. Now you always stand in fear of temporal evils and are much agitated by them, though

they pass away even as arrows. Why then are you not moved by eternal evils and why do you not fear them more?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments.* (Ps. cxviii, 120.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this voice with which Christ will pronounce sentence on the reprobate is called the voice of thunder: *the voice of thunder.* For it will be an outburst of His just anger, long restrained and repressed in His heart, and it will burst forth with all the greater fury over the wicked because so long deferred. It will fill those miserable ones with such horror that they will call on the mountains to bury them and to plunge them in the abysses.

APPLICATION. Do you not fear now to provoke Him to anger? Pause awhile and reflect seriously on that sentence: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* In order that you may not hear it pronounced upon you, bear now willingly and patiently those sufferings which God sends you in this life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy indignation, nor chastise me in thy wrath. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.* (Ps. vi, 2, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it is said that the voice of this thunder will be *in a wheel*, and this because it will fill all the immensity of eternity. Eternity shall never have an end, since after millions and millions of centuries have passed away there will always remain yet more. The wheel of eternity, whether for good or for ill, will ever continue to revolve.

APPLICATION. What would become of you should

you come to be lost ? *Thou shalt be destroyed for ever.* (Jer. li, 26.) Time here goes round and changes ; but the condition of him who will no longer have the time to do good will never change. Endeavour therefore to make all safe for yourself by doing good now whilst still you have the time.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I had in my mind the eternal years.* (Ps. lxxvi, 6.)

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

(Read Luke v, 1–11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY who those are who in the night of this world have toiled much but without fruit. They are those persons especially who busy themselves in works and worldly affairs which belong not to their state of life ; those also who attend to the affairs proper to their state, not indeed for the end of serving God, but in order to gain praise and honour, to improve their position, and to promote their own comfort ; finally those who perform their actions, whether good or indifferent, in such a way as not to set before themselves any virtuous or supernatural motive. All such at the end of the night of their life will find their labours and their works lost, as it were, like an arrow that has missed its mark, or like useless matter fit only for burning. *The labours of the people shall come to nothing, and the nations shall go to the fire and shall perish.* (Jer. li, 58.)

APPLICATION. Enter seriously within yourself and reflect on your life in general and on your works, that you may not incur so terrible a loss and so fatal a disaster.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man is like to*

vanity: his days pass away like a shadow. (Ps. cxliii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how our Blessed Lord said to St. Peter, in order that he might make a great catch of fish, after having toiled all the night long and caught nothing: *Launch out into the deep*, that he might cast off from the land and go forward out into the deep sea. So too must we do if we would labour with profit. We must detach ourselves from the love of transitory things, and lift up our mind to that which is heavenly and eternal. As long as we remain bound by affection to the goods of the present life and have no thought of future good things, we shall not be able to raise our intention to God, nor to acquire the true blessings of heaven.

APPLICATION. If in your work then you keep your intention directed towards earthly honours, ease, benefits and advantages, you will in very truth be *toiling at nothing*. Therefore, *launch out into the deep*, raise your thoughts, your intentions and your affections to God and to heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord will reward me according to my justice; and will repay me according to the cleanness of my hands.* (Ps. xvii, 21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the abundant draught of fish was made by St. Peter because he cast his nets in the name of our Blessed Lord and in obedience to Him. Such is the real way of becoming truly rich and of pursuing your labours with success.

APPLICATION. Direct all your actions, however unimportant they may seem to be, to the name and glory of God: *All whatsoever ye do, in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Col. iii, 17.) And by so doing your labours will amass for you a rich treasure for eternity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed are all they that fear the Lord : that walk in his ways.* (Ps. cxxvii, 1.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PERSEVERANCE IN DOING GOOD

He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved. (Matt. x, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the gain is so great to those who *sow in the spirit* (Gal. vi, 8), that it behoves us not to lose time nor to yield to weariness. *For what things a man shall sow those also shall he reap.* You began well in youth with fervour and with generosity. Follow on now as years advance and even unto old age : *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand cease.* (Eccles. xi, 6.)

APPLICATION. Do not therefore let yourself be overcome by weariness or by trouble, for *he who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly.* (2 Cor. ix, 6.) Those good works which you once began of mortification and penance, of charity and of devotion, see that you still pursue with earnestness and joy to the end. *In doing good let us not fail* (Gal. vi, 9), for should you cease to sow, you may easily lose all.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Every day will I bless thee : and I will praise thy name for ever. Yea, for ever and ever.* (Ps. cxliv, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that nothing serves so much to relieve the weariness of the poor labourer on his farm as the thought of his future harvest. How much more therefore ought you to strengthen yourself to endure with constancy the labour of good works, by the thought of the harvest ? The reward of the good works that you will reap in eternity, will be a harvest

of glory and of contentment that shall never end: *he shall reap life everlasting.* (Gal. vi, 8.)

APPLICATION. If then the reaping shall be perpetual, is it not but just that in these few days of life assigned to you by God, you should never for a moment withhold your hand from work through weariness or fatigue? The labourer when sowing endures much toil, and at the reaping he rejoices, but still not without some fatigue. Whereas you will labour for a very short time in sowing, but at the harvest you will rejoice, and that without tiring ever.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* (Ps. cxxv, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in order to ensure this blessed harvest, which is not only certain but is most plentiful in the future life, it is not merely necessary to scatter now the seed of good works constantly, but it is essential to protect it from the birds of prey, even as all good labourers do, by covering it. It is in this way also that the humble act. They are anxious to cover and to hide the good they do, whereas the vainglorious would have it to be easily seen, and so if they do not lose the whole they lose the greater part. *You have sown much and brought in little.* (Ag. i, 6.)

APPLICATION. If you would gain much harvest by the good you do, hide it as much as you can from the eyes of men. Guard your thoughts against all vainglory, because such thoughts are the birds that devour your good seed. *The fowls of the air devoured it.* (Luke viii, 5.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is a firmament to them that fear him: My eyes are ever towards the Lord.* (Ps. xxiv, 14, 15.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JESUS CHRIST OUR JUDGE

Give an account of thy stewardship. (Luke xvi. 2.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus came on earth to shed His blood for you, and now sits at the right hand of the Father, where He has made Himself your advocate. At the moment of your death this same Jesus will come before you, no longer as advocate, but as a judge from whom there is no appeal. What will become of you in that hour without such a protector? All the good in which you now rejoice, all the patience with which divine justice bears with you, all this is yours because Jesus has constituted Himself your advocate. But at the hour of your death, Jesus will lay down this merciful office, and you will see Him before you, not as an advocate but as a judge without appeal. He will be exactly informed of all your thoughts, of all your words, of all your works, because He has seen all, He has heard all, and He has been present at all.

APPLICATION. And what will you do at His dread appearance?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Then shall all the trees of the woods rejoice before the face of the Lord, because he cometh.* (Ps. xcv, 12, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that to no sort of expedient can you have recourse at that dreadful moment. Would you seek to appease Him, or to excuse yourself? Not indeed to appease Him, for there will be no time then for supplication; He is the judge. The more patiently He has borne with you all the days of your life, the more inexorable will He then be. Therefore

it is useless to hope to obtain pardon or to make Him lay aside His anger, which is said to be that of the Lamb, precisely to denote that it will be unalterable: *Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb.* (Apoc. vi, 16.)

APPLICATION. Ponder well now, *what then thou wilt do.* You will perhaps turn and pray that the mountains may fall on you, and bury you in the depths of the earth from His anger. But to what purpose? You must hear explained most minutely to you all the details of your whole life, so that you may receive the final sentence from His divine mouth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Clouds and darkness are round about him: justice and judgment are the establishment of his throne. A fire shall go before him, and shall burn his enemies round about.* (Ps. xcvi, 2, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in that hour still less will it be possible for you to defend or excuse yourself. Not to defend yourself, because your sins will then be clear and certain. Nor to excuse yourself on the plea either of ignorance or of weakness. What ignorance can you allege, who have been born in the centre of Christianity, who have lived surrounded by so many good examples of virtue? Have you wilfully closed your eyes that you might not see? Then will your ignorance only serve for your more severe judgment. Would you perhaps allege your weakness? But how can you do so, if your weakness arose from your not making use of the remedies and opportune helps at hand, or from not keeping yourself far from all dangerous occasions?

APPLICATION. What will then be your thoughts and feelings! You will hear yourself sentenced to expiate your sins by Him Who for you shed all His blood on the cross, and Who at the right hand of the

Father had never ceased to pray and plead for you as your most merciful advocate.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unto thee will I cry, O Lord ; O my God, be not thou silent to me ; lest I become like them that go down into the pit.* (Ps. xxvii, 1.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TRUST IN GOD

O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? (Matt. xiv, 31.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that a great difficulty for those who serve God is never to distrust Him, either in adversity or amid aridity or darkness of mind, although He seems to have almost totally abandoned them. When we feel, as it were, and enjoy the divine presence, it is easy to do well, but it is very hard to do so when we remain so to speak in darkness.

APPLICATION. If then you find yourself in this state, be sure that our Lord is trying your fidelity and constancy. Therefore He bids you await Him patiently, and He will come. (Habak. ii, 3.) This means, that at least you move not from your post, that you continue as usual to practise the good works of prayer, of Holy Communion, of penance, and of fidelity to your ordinary duties, although you feel no longer the same relish for them. Oh what great merit there is in this constancy ! This is to serve God for God Himself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With expectation I have waited for the Lord : and he was attentive to me.* (Ps. xxxix, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that such constancy must be accompanied also by great longanimity, for it is easy to have it for a short time, but not for a long one.

Therefore you are warned by the same prophet, *If it make delay, wait for it.* It seems to you that it delays to come, notwithstanding that you do everything that lies in your power. You plead, you supplicate and you are on your guard lest you give God any occasion, by reason of your faults, of withdrawing Himself from you; and yet He does not make His presence sensible to you.

APPLICATION. Do not however doubt but that in the end He will return, and the longer He tarries, so much the more will you enjoy the delights of His presence, in reward for having waited with a lively faith so long.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us : for the years in which we have seen evil.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that even if you should have to await God's visitation all the days of your life in a state of aridity and of desolation, a rare case indeed, you will then find Him very near to you at death. And then, oh how He will unveil to you His face ! How He will help you and make you understand that He always loved you much more than you imagined ! This is often the recompense of those who have served God faithfully in times of desolation, to die in the greatest sweetness in the peace of the Lord. They lay aside all scruples at that moment, all anguish, all spiritual darkness.

APPLICATION. Death may be for you very near at hand. Be it then far from you to lose during this so brief a space of time your constancy, your fidelity, and your unbounded hope in God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence shall come my help.*

My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (Ps. cxx, 1–2.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

NEGLECT IN LITTLE THINGS

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater. (Luke xvi, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when God says in Ecclesiasticus, *He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little* (Ecclus. xix, 1), He does not say that he who commits venial sins will by little and little fall into mortal sin. He says that he who despises them, who is not solicitous to fly from them, is as one who considers them as of no consequence with regard to his salvation.

APPLICATION. If it happens that you are thus deluded, oh in what danger then are you of being lost! Because it is an infallible saying of God, that he who despises small things will little by little fall into great ones. What avails it to a ship at sea that its holes are but small. If they are neglected they will sink it little by little as much as large ones would. So will it be with you if you despise faults that are small.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths. I have sworn, and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 105, 106.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that by contemning or neglecting small faults, you do yourself a double injury at one and the same time. First, by little and little you lose that fear which restrains you from greater sin. For venial sins do not show their sad effects at once as great sins do, but produce them after the manner of a blunt

file or blade. Hence after a while you begin to think they are of no consequence. And so a man does not hesitate to increase them to such a degree as will bring about mortal sin, and so the death of his soul. One avoids poison because it kills. Bitter fruits which slowly harm us are sometimes eaten with avidity, and yet in the long run they are capable of causing death. The second injury is, that in contemning small sins the inclinations of our ill-regulated passions are increased more and more. For the more they obtain, the more audaciously they demand more, like fire which by being fed gains force and never decreases. So that not content with the lesser sensible pleasure of small faults, they seek for greater in mortal sins. For this reason the devil is satisfied at first with small faults, because in this way the road is more easily opened to grave sins.

APPLICATION. Consider seriously then what you are doing if you so easily give way to the first assaults of the demon and of your passions and inclinations, which are often worse than any demon.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I meditated on thy commandments which I loved.* (Ps. cxviii, 47.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it is not so rare a thing as you may imagine to pass from small sins to great ones. For God often punishes small sins by permitting greater sins, when He perceives that salutary warnings do not avail, but that venial sins are multiplied more and more without making any account of them.

APPLICATION. Possibly your sins are small, but also they are far too many. Dry grass of itself weighs little, but if it be piled up high, as is usually done, the carts will creak much more than under a load of stones. What wonder then will it be if He take from you His protection, and deprive you of His special helps,

without which you would very soon lose His grace and fall into mortal sin?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head: and my heart hath forsaken me.* (Ps. xxxix, 13.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REWARD OF SUFFERINGS

Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven. (Matt. v, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the Apostle St. Paul (2 Cor. iv, 17) calls all that we suffer at present momentary and light. For if we look at the labour that is passed, it causes us now no pain; if we look at the present, what is it?—momentary and light. It is labour and possibly suffering, yes, but momentary, exceedingly brief in itself, and much more so if compared with eternity. At the same time it is light in respect to the debt due for our sins; light in respect to the grace bestowed on us in order to bear it; light in regard to the reward which is prepared for us if we bear it with patience.

APPLICATION. Endeavour to reflect on these things in the midst of the tribulations you suffer in this present life. Thus you may the more easily recognise them to be, as in reality they are, only momentary and light.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My days have declined like a shadow; and I am withered like grass. But thou, O Lord, endurest for ever.* (Ps. ci, 12, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how great is the blessing that these small sufferings will gain for you. It will be a

blessing *above measure exceedingly*, because it is far superior to your merits; because it is not subject to the changes of this world of ours, but is unchangeable, immovable, eternal. Thus the glory of paradise is called *a weight of glory*, not because it will prove a burden or a weariness to any one, but because it contains a delight so excessive, that human strength would be oppressed by it, were it not strengthened by the light of glory.

APPLICATION. If then you would be encouraged and animated in your sufferings, raise your mind often to dwell on those gifts and blessings which are proper to eternal glory. They are superabundant, unchangeable, eternal and immense.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unto thee have I lifted up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.* (Ps. cxxi, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that tribulation is said to work in us actually this glory, not indeed as a physical and efficient cause, but as a moral and meritorious one. Thus you will understand that glory is not so much a gift as a reward, although it is so superabundant a one. Therefore as God placed Adam in the earthly paradise to work and to keep it, so believe that He sends you tribulation, reproach and infirmity that they may work in you a still more happy paradise in heaven.

APPLICATION. Let Him then work His divine will in you. For the more merit you acquire the greater will be your reward. Would not that plot of land or soil be foolish, which should complain of the labourer ill-treating it with his hoe or his plough?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou wilt render to every man according to his works.* (Ps. lxi, 13.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SUDDEN CALL OF DEATH

Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee.
(Luke xii, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ called that rich man a fool who, without doubt, by the world would have been set down as a wise and prudent man. For, having gathered in a good harvest, he began considering within himself, how he could best preserve it and longest enjoy it, *for many years*. But by God he was held as a fool. He did not recognise that all those good things came from God, neither did he return thanks to Him, Who had granted him them. He planned to use all for the good of the body, nothing for the benefit of his soul.

APPLICATION. Now consider how much greater a fool is he, who is inordinately attached to and excessively craves after the good things of this present life which are worthless, and neglects those of eternity which alone are of importance. Beware lest you too be of the number of those fools, who are innumerable. *The number of fools is infinite.* (Eccles. i, 15.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The senseless and the fool shall perish together. And they shall leave their riches to strangers.* (Ps. xlviii, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the unhappy state of this fool in the gospel. In the very night, in which he was most busily planning how to use his store of goods to the best advantage, he heard the message that his soul was to leave his body : *This night do they require thy soul of thee.* It does not say *ask*, but *require*, to denote that previously too he had had his warnings by

the inspirations of grace, and by the examples of the sudden deaths of others which had admonished him to be prepared also to die.

APPLICATION. How many sudden deaths do not you also see or hear of among your acquaintances, friends and companions? These are all so many warnings to you to be prepared for death. How little you think of it! How heedless you are of these graces from God!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To-day if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* (Ps. xciv, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the reproof finally given to this rich man: *And whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?* Doubly bitter must this reproof have sounded to him. He saw all these earthly goods fail him, which with so much labour and sweat he had collected for the benefit of his body. Much more bitter still, he saw his soul, through his own neglect during life, wanting in all those spiritual goods, which in the hour of death would have served him to such good purpose.

APPLICATION. Begin to consider seriously what alone matters, if you would not merit a similar reproof: *Whose shall those things be which thou hast prepared?* Of what use will be all your studies and your labours which were not directed to God, but to the acquisition of some present good? Of what good to you will those positions of honour be which were gained to the prejudice of God's holy law? Of what profit will be the ease and pleasure you procured with so much dissipation of spirit? Of what value will be those friendships which were so harmful to your soul? All that does not tend to the salvation of your soul is of no

worth. There is only one thing of importance, and that is to think of eternity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All the foolish of heart were troubled. They have slept their sleep : and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands.* (Ps. lxxv, 6.)

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
THE GOSPEL LAW OF JUSTICE

(Read Matt. v, 20–24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that God rightly exacts greater perfection in the observance of the Evangelical law, or that of the Gospel, than in the observance of the Mosaic, which was but an imperfect law, given to a people who were in a state of servitude and to whom only earthly blessings were promised : *For the law brought nothing to perfection.* (Heb. vii. 19.) On the contrary the law of the Gospel is most perfect and excellent. It brings more light and gives greater helps of grace. Consequently it justly requires more perfection, not only in outward acts but in the interior spirit. Hence Christians are bound to practise greater perfection by this law, than were the Hebrews under the Mosaic law.

APPLICATION. May it not be that many with far fewer graces are superior to you in the practice of virtue ? Fear lest our Lord should punish your ingratitude.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I lifted up my hands to thy commandments, which I loved. And I was exercised in thy justifications.* (Ps. cxviii, 48.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY in what the Gospel law principally demands greater perfection from all who are Christians. It is in love of our neighbour. In the

Mosaic law it was forbidden to harm one's neighbour in his goods or person; that of the Gospel not only forbids us to harm our neighbour by scornful or hurtful words, but even to nourish in the interior of our hearts any kind of rancour or disdain against him. *Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.* (Matt. v, 22.) Such is the high standard of charity proposed to all!

APPLICATION. How much do you deceive yourself if you are one of those who are less afraid, and make less account, of want of charity to your neighbour than of some other failings. Do you not often cherish bitterness in your heart without even striving to banish it altogether?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Or who shall rest in thy holy hill? He that speaketh truth in his heart: who hath not used deceit in his tongue.* (Ps. xiv, 1–3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how strongly God insists that you should banish from your heart all rancour against your brethren and preserve perfect charity. For He desires you, if you were about to offer a gift at the altar, or to say Holy Mass, and should then remember that you have wronged any one, or that you are harbouring rancour in your heart against your brother, to go and be reconciled to him, not only interiorly but also exteriorly, and then return to offer your gift or sacrifice at the altar. He shows thereby that He desires this act of charity towards your brother more than the act of honour which you owe to Him.

APPLICATION. Does not all this suffice to make you esteem the value of union and charity with your neighbour more highly than any other virtue?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *For the sake of my brethren, and my neighbours, I spoke peace of thee.* (Ps. cxxi, 8.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE LAST JUDGMENT

The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment. (John v, 28, 29.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how loudly that great trumpet of the archangel St. Michael will resound. It will be heard by all, and will call forth every one from the tomb, summoning them to appear in the valley of Jehosaphat. The trumpet of the archangel will be at once a declaration of war to the reprobate and of triumph to the elect. To those who now will not listen to the voice of God, which conveys to us His inspirations, nor attend to the voice of His ministers, the trumpet in that last day will sound the note of war. It will be a burst of triumph and gladness for those who now close not their ears to the voice of God.

APPLICATION. Unhappy then will you be if now you despise the voice of your God. The voice of that trumpet will then be to you most terrible!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art terrible and who shall resist thee? From that time thy wrath. Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still.* (Ps. lxxv, 8, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that at that sound all the dead will come forth from their graves, rich and poor, wise and ignorant. But with what a difference! The elect

will come forth with their bodies no longer enfeebled by labour or sickness or penance but most glorious; the reprobate with their bodies so loathsome and repulsive that to re-enter them will be one of their greatest punishments. What diversity too of sentiment will the different souls have towards their bodies? How the reprobate will curse the immoderate love they bore to them! How the elect will rejoice at the penances which they gave them to suffer! Even more painful will be the separation that the angels will make between the elect and the reprobate: *The angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just.* (Matt. xiii, 49.) The good shall rise on high in order to go to meet Christ: *they shall be taken up in the clouds to meet Christ into the air.* (1 Thess. iv, 16.) The reprobate will remain below amid the earth's desolation. Oh what wailing! Oh what cries of those who during their lives were wont to rule and to command, in seeing themselves on that day so abased!

APPLICATION. Will you not rather regard it as a great boon and blessing to live now a humble and rigorous life, in order to merit the blessed lot which on that tremendous day will fall to the elect, and escape the lot of the reprobate?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God arose in judgment, to save all the meek of the earth.* (Ps. lxxv, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that there is no other reason assigned for the difference of their destiny, than that of the works done in this life. Those who have striven to do good, *who have done good things*, be they unknown, or poor or ignorant *shall come forth unto the resurrection of life.* Those who have *done evil*, be they wealthy, nobles, princes or monarchs *will come forth unto the*

resurrection of judgment and be sentenced to eternal punishment.

APPLICATION. What say you to this, you who perhaps hold all else in esteem except the doing of good works ? In that last awful day you will recognise how much better is one only act of virtue, than all the grandeur, all the wisdom of the most learned in this world. For on that day nothing will be held in esteem but good works, nothing will then be punished but evil deeds. From this learn what alone you should now fear, and what alone you should now value most highly.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *At thy rebuke they shall flee, at the voice of thy thunder they shall fear.* (Ps. ciii, 7.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ABIDING SORROW FOR SIN

Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much. (Luke vii, 47.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that David, when truly repentant of his sin, heard the forgiveness of God pronounced by the mouth of the prophet Nathan, who said to him : *The Lord hath also taken away thy sin* (2 Kings xii, 13.) He was intimately assured of its remission. And yet, after such a certain assurance, he did not then cease to mourn his fall but repeatedly asked and besought God's pardon : *Wash me yet more from my iniquity.* (Ps. l, 4.)

APPLICATION. How do you act who not only are not certain, but perhaps even most uncertain whether God has forgiven your sins ? How many tears till now have you shed to wash away your sins ? What penance have you done for them ? Think how many nights of

tears one sin only cost David, although he knew that he was pardoned: *Every night I will wash my bed with my tears.* (Ps. vi, 7.) And does it seem to you that you have made complete satisfaction for all your debt, when you have just once asked pardon in confession for so many sins, for which you cannot be certain that you are yet perfectly forgiven?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins.* (Ps. l, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that after receiving pardon David continued ever to detest his sin, saying, *Wash me yet more.* For in order to be perfectly pure and clean it is not enough that the sin be remitted, but it is necessary that all the remains of past sin be removed, and the danger of future evil be taken away.

APPLICATION. Oh if you did but know the evil propensities that each one of your sins still leaves in you, though it be confessed and pardoned! Then you would not think you had made satisfaction in having once wept over it. You would continue to weep over it and heartily detest it. For sin, although already pardoned, can work immense harm by the bad effects it leaves in the soul. *Be not without fear about sin forgiven.* (Ecclus. v, 5.) See you not how many evil effects original sin still works in you, although you have been cleansed from it by holy baptism? Every personal sin works in you similar harm although forgiven by the sacrament of penance.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away thy face from my sins: and blot out all my iniquities.* (Ps. l, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the repentant David set himself purposely to consider and to re-consider the gravity of the sin he had committed. Hence he could never cease to weep for it, and to cleanse his soul ever

more and more : *For I know my iniquity.* Just as it is impossible to know clearly some object supremely good and not love it intensely, so it is likewise impossible to recognise an infinite evil such as sin is, and not hate it immensely.

APPLICATION. Why is it that you do not still grieve for the sins you have already confessed ? It is because you do not realise their gravity. Begin seriously to reflect on the great malice which these sins contain. Then you will never cease to detest and to weep over them. The sin of David was ever before his eyes, reproaching him always with the ingratitude he had shown towards God for the sake of so base a sin. You on the contrary put away the remembrance of your past sins, and therefore reap not from them the salutary fruits of compunction and of humility.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.* (Ps. l, 5.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SELF WILL

I seek not my own will but the will of him that sent me. (John v, 30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the chief reason why even spiritual people love to do their own will is because they hope thereby to find quiet. And yet in effect it is quite the contrary. There is nothing which can so produce trouble and disturbance within you as the following of your own will. You will always be in doubt whether it is better to do things in one way or in another, whether to do this or do that, whether to sleep or to watch. And the more you reflect, the more you are at a loss.

APPLICATION. If you would live in quiet and in peace, resolve not to live according to your own whims and ways. Submit your will in all things to the precepts and laws of the Church and to your lawful superiors.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Much peace have they that love thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 165.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that another reason, for which you love to do your own will, is in order to obtain not only peace but also the esteem and praise of men, as if it were base to do the will of another, and noble to do one's own. And yet it works out just the contrary way. *He shall be confounded in his own will* says God by the Prophet Osee. (Os. x, 6.) For God seeing men too much set on gratifying their own inclinations, which like untamed horses lead them to the edge of the precipice, arrests their course and casts them prostrate to the ground.

APPLICATION. You seek perhaps to obtain for yourself a prominent post, an employment, an honour, hoping to succeed therein with credit and with glory to yourself. If God loves you much, He will give you just the very opposite, because if you succeeded it would be far too dangerous for you. You would thus become more attached to your own will, and this would do you still more harm. If you wish to be guided by your own will, you will never be at peace : *You will be confounded in your own will.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, art my protector, my glory . . . I have cried to the Lord with my voice : and he hath heard me from his holy hill.* (Ps. iii, 4, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the great happiness of a life in which one lives in constant if not perpetual obedience. It does away with all disturbance ; it makes it possible

to enjoy real peace and quiet, provided one obeys fully from the heart.

APPLICATION. Whether you do little penance for your sins or much, whether you study or labour, whether you be employed in this office or that, you are by obedience always sure of doing that which is most pleasing to God, and of acquiring for yourself also greater esteem and glory both here and hereafter. Now is not this an immense blessing of itself : *He that keepeth the commandment shall find no evil.* (Ecclus. viii, 5.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have restrained my feet from every evil way : that I may keep thy words. I have not declined from thy judgments : because thou hast set me a law.* (Ps. cxviii, 101, 102.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SHORT COMBAT OF LIFE

In the world you shall have distress ; but have confidence, I have overcome the world. (John xvi, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that like a soldier you are placed in this world in order to fight against three great enemies : the world, the flesh and the devil. If they do not perpetually assault you, at least they oblige you to be continually armed and always prepared. If they seem to you to grant you a little truce, they return to the assault more furiously than ever.

APPLICATION. Therefore you must ever be in fear and trembling, as if the battle were always impending. Never hope for peace. *All the days I am in warfare,* says holy Job. (Job xiv, 14.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deliver me, O Lord ; they have devised iniquities in their hearts, all the day long they designed battles.* (Ps. cxxxix, 1, 3.)

Consider secondly that you should not on that account be dismayed or discouraged, for it is only a question of a short time. Such a warfare fills you with alarm because you imagine, as most do, that you have to live a long life through many years. Think rather the contrary as the same holy Job did, who in everything that happened to him, remembered the shortness of his life. Sometimes he compared it to the passage of a courier who seems as it were to fly, and again to a leaf or a flower that in a moment is dried up and is withered. The very thought that the warfare will soon end, will also animate you to bear with invincible patience the troubles thereof.

Application. Perhaps you have accustomed yourself to do the opposite and therefore it is that you feel yourself depressed. O how much shorter your life may be than you think! *Behold I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast.* (Apoc. iii, 11.)

Affections and resolutions. *My days are vanished like smoke, my days have gone down like a shadow, and I am withered like the grass.* (Ps. ci, 4, 12.)

Consider thirdly that in order the more efficaciously to animate yourself to bear present trials, you should not only remember the shortness of this life, but you should consider the change that will succeed after you pass from this warfare to the kingdom of heaven and to the throne won by the merits of the warfare. Holy Job said that he awaited *until my change comes.* This change you also should look forward to. Now your condition is one of labour, of fear and of weariness ; hereafter it will be one of repose, of security and of joy, for such is the happy state of paradise! It is certain that if you fully realised the happiness of such a state, you would live ever in a holy impatience to reach the hour of your change.

APPLICATION. That you may with holy Job calmly await this change, it behoves you to live well every day of your life, as death may come to you on any day. Live so that you may not be of the number of those who do not merely await death, but rather fear it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee: he shall dwell in thy courts. We shall be filled with the good things of thy house: holy is thy temple.* (Ps. lxiv, 5.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JESUS HANGING ON THE CROSS

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert so must the Son of man be lifted up. (John iii, 14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus Christ hung upon the cross as did the brazen serpent in the wilderness. This brazen serpent was not capable of causing death as do real serpents, but was only a serpent in appearance, fashioned in the furnace; nevertheless by looking upon it those bitten by real serpents were to be healed. Similarly Christ, Himself sinless, by the heat of a furnace also, that is to say the furnace of His excessive love, took the form of a sinner and hung on the cross for the healing of all of us who are bitten by the serpents of our own sins, that by looking on Him hanging thereon we may be cured.

APPLICATION. Fix then your gaze upon this your Saviour, so that you may be made whole. And if you are not completely healed it is only a sign that you have not kept your eyes well fixed upon Him. He hangs there for love of you in supreme poverty and destitution, utterly despised, and in most bitter pain.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, O God our*

protector: and look on the face of thy Christ. (Ps. lxxxiii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ calls this hanging as a guilty criminal upon the cross His exaltation. He counts it as bringing Him not opprobrium but glory, remaining on the cross for love of you: *The Son of man must be lifted up*, etc. But why *must*? Would He perchance have lost some degree of greatness and of glory, if He had not thus endured such ignominy and suffering for you? Or would He not have been equally blessed, if you had been so unhappy as to lose your soul?

APPLICATION. How is it then that you are not astounded and amazed at this excess and refinement of love? Why are you not filled with confusion on seeing that your God, your Redeemer, counts it an honour to suffer thus on your behalf? And are you so little willing to suffer anything for love of that Lord, Who gloried so much to die on the cross for the love of you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The council of the wicked hath besieged me; they have pierced my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones.* (Ps. xxi, 17, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it is said that the serpent in the desert was lifted up for a sign. *Set it up for a sign.* (Num. xxi, 8.) So Christ likewise hangs on the cross *for a sign*, because He is there for a sign, whereby each one must hope to obtain salvation. And as He is a sign, so also is He the standard, the glorious standard of the faithful who profess to serve under His banner. A good soldier never loses sight of his standard, never ceases to follow whithersoever it is borne.

APPLICATION. You as a Christian make special profession of being a soldier of Christ crucified. Hence

you must ever keep your eyes turned towards the glorious standard of the cross, and to the utmost of your power follow close to Jesus crucified. Thus you will be a Christian in very truth and not in name or in appearance only.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He saved them from the hand of them that hated them : he redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.* (Ps. cv, 10.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TEMPTATION

Why sleep you? Arise, pray lest you enter into temptation. (Luke xxii, 46.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that to be tempted is the lot of all who serve God, and more particularly is it the lot of beginners. And it is to prepare for this that Ecclesiasticus exhorts in these words : *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation.* (Ecclus. ii, 1.) Now if the more advanced in years must suffer even the most severe temptations, it is not possible for beginners to be free from them, because of the rage of the devil in seeing them on the point of escaping from his hands. Consequently as the former must always live in fear and be prepared for temptation, much more should beginners fear, that they may remain firm in their resolve to serve God.

APPLICATION *Stand in justice and in fear ; in justice*, by doing good works and meriting thereby the protection of the Lord ; *in fear*, by a total distrust in yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice unto him with trembling.* (Ps. ii, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the first preparation you should make for this combat is to understand the devices of the tempter. They are usually similar to those with which the evil one assaulted Christ in the desert. The devil in the desert suggested to Christ first a lesser sin, then a greater, and finally the gravest of all. Seeing Him wearied and worn by a long fast, he exhorted Him to restore His strength by a miracle. Then, foiled in his first attack, he tempted Him in the second, to show by vainglory how greatly He trusted in the help of God in all His difficulties, by throwing Himself down from the temple as if He had no need to take care of His own life. Finally, he tempted Him the third time to ambition, offering Him the possession of the whole world, if He would adore him.

APPLICATION. Thus then does the devil assault those who give themselves up to the service of God. He sets before them their own weakness and the greater strictness of life which they have undertaken, and tempts them to pusillanimity. He makes them think that without a manifest miracle they cannot live thus. And if by fervour of spirit they despise the temptations, he tempts them to an indiscreet ill-treatment of themselves. He induces them thus to presumption, in order that they may grow weary under the burden, and give up altogether. When all this does not succeed, he puts before their eyes the liberty and happiness which may be enjoyed in a worldly life, the dignities and the grandeur they may hope for. Thus he tempts them to a kind of apostasy from God. This is the way of the tempter; he leads up to the greatest sin by little by little. If then you have resisted his first assaults, never rest secure, but prepare for still fiercer attacks.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Arise, O Lord, disappoint him and supplant him ; deliver my soul from the wicked one : the sword from the enemies of thy hand.* (Ps. xvi, 13, 14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you should learn from Christ the art of repelling these assaults. Christ did not set Himself to dispute with the evil one. He rejected him, each of the three times, with strength, with promptness, and with few words. In like manner we too must beware of arguing with those imaginations, wherein the devil has hidden himself in order to give battle. When he tempts you to be pusillanimous and to relax a stricter rule of life, say to him : *Not in bread alone doth man live.* That which our Lord shall provide for me is quite sufficient for me. When he tempts you presumptuously to yield to the stimulus of extraordinary and indiscreet fervour in expectation also of extraordinary help, say to him : *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* And when lastly he tempts you to ambition and fallacious hopes, put him at once to flight and say : *Begone Satan.*

APPLICATION. Ever bear in mind that the evil one will represent to you all the most attractive and the best things of the world, promising what he cannot give, in order to flatter and to ensnare you. He will however hide from you all the bitterness, the heart-breakings and all the evils that he will cause you, and all the misery that with his malicious lying he desires for you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast been my hope : a tower of strength against the face of the enemy.* (Ps. lx, 4.)

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND

(Read Mark viii, 1–10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the devotedness of this multitude of people. They gave themselves up to following Christ for three consecutive days, without taking any thought of providing themselves with necessary food, nor with any fear of perishing with hunger. Yet our Lord had not promised them food, nor could they see that He had made any preparation for their needs.

APPLICATION. You have heard over and over again the promises made by God in Holy Scripture, and confirmed by many examples. He will take care of all who follow Him, and He will provide for the needs of those who serve Him. Nevertheless in your life you remain so full of solicitude and have so little trust in divine Providence! Oh how greatly you wrong God! Begin now to leave all this solicitude of yourself, and to trust in the loving care of God for you, as St. Peter exhorts you to do : *Casting all your care upon him, for he has care of you.* (1 Peter v, 7.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee : he shall not suffer the just to waver for ever.* (Ps. liv, 23.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what attention and what tenderness of affection Jesus showed in providing for the needs of the faithful multitude : *I have compassion on the multitude.* He felt for them with the compassion of a father's heart. He would not that they should return to their homes fasting, lest they should faint by the way, but by the miraculous multiplication of the

loaves He fed them, and that most liberally, in the desert.

APPLICATION. So likewise will God do for you, if forgetting yourself you attend only to serve and follow Him faithfully. Jesus said to St. Catherine of Siena: *Think of me and I will think of you.* Hence the Saint laying aside every care of her own interests, her health, her reputation, her life, gave herself only to serve and please Him, greatly to her own advantage, as she lived thenceforth under the special protection of God. Is not this sufficient for you also?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes are ever towards the Lord.* (Ps. xxiv, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that by that bread alone, which was so miraculously multiplied, they were filled and satisfied: *They were filled.* They were spiritually refreshed by the heavenly doctrine and the marvel of the miracle. At the same time they were refreshed in body by the bread, which gave them relish and renewed their strength, for it was the work of omnipotence. He who, placing all his trust in God, attends only to serve Him without giving any thought to himself, depending solely on divine Providence, will experience a similar blessing and enjoy a like consolation.

APPLICATION. Strive therefore to live according as God directs you by means of Holy Church and her pastors. By so doing, nothing will be wanting to make you live contentedly.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing.* (Ps. xxii, 1.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. (Luke xii, 37.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the law of death for men is said to be decreed for mankind, because death is not a natural law for man as it is for the animal creation, but a positive one. For man was made by God immortal in virtue of original justice. But as he lost this gift for himself and for all his posterity, the decree is now universal and embraces all men.

APPLICATION. Do what you will in order to continue in life, in the end you must die. Have you not heard of Lamech who lived six hundred years and then *he died*! Of Malaleel who lived eight hundred years, and then *he died*? Of Methuselah who lived nine hundred years, and then *he died*? So it will be with you. You know that you also must die after a few years. Why then do you live so attached to this earth? Think of your departure from it and think of it often.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who is the man that shall live, and not see death?* (Ps. lxxxviii, 49.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that *it is appointed unto men once to die*. If you were once to perform the act of death badly, there would be no repairing it. You can never correct the error of dying in sin.

APPLICATION. What then are you doing, that as yet you have not given all your care to making well a passage which can be made once only? Remember whither it conducts you. It leads you to a house

wherein you are to live forever, either one of eternal joy or one of eternal sorrow.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell.* (Ps. lxxxv, 13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this passage of death is more supremely important because of what succeeds it, than because of what it terminates: *After this the judgment.* In the same moment, and in the same place where you die, you will see set up before you that dread tribunal. There alone, without companion, without help, without even your own body, you will appear in the presence of your omnipotent Judge, Who without partiality will judge you according to your merits.

APPLICATION. How then will you stand? There will be no longer time to appease Him, nor to supplicate Him. For in that moment of your death all the process will have been completed, and the decree pronounced either of eternal reward or of eternal punishment. But each one survives, as it were, his own death in many ways. He lives in the memory of men who perhaps esteem that man good who in reality was bad, and contrariwise think him bad who was good. Therefore completeness will be given to the particular judgment by the universal judgment, in which the truth will be made manifest to all, and each one will receive his reward according to his merit, and this also in the body. Bear this great truth in mind; you will fear death and judgment the less.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God is a just judge, strong and patient: Is he angry every day? Except you will be converted, he will brandish his sword: he hath bent his bow.* (Ps. vii, 12, 13.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PATIENCE IN TRIALS

In your patience you shall possess your souls. (Luke xxi, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that of three kinds of people, who are spiritually sick, there are some who desire to be cured, but do not wish to submit to the bitter and painful treatment necessary. Others will only submit to the treatment that pleases their whims. Finally there are those who offer themselves as ready for whatever treatment may be required, saying to our Lord: Burn, cut, dispose of me as Thou wilt, I am in Thy hands.

APPLICATION. This is the only way to be healed of your infirmities. Let God apply to you whatever remedy pleases Him, because He alone knows the one particular remedy which will be most advantageous to you: *Take all that shall be brought upon thee.* (Ecclus. ii, 4.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My lot is in thy hands.* (Ps. xxx, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is not so difficult for you to bear a painful remedy either for sickness of body or affliction of soul which comes to you direct from God. It is more difficult to bear patiently the burdens and humiliations which God lays on you by means of your superiors, or of others who may entertain ill-will towards you. Remember however that not always does the physician apply the treatment with his own hands to the sick person, but more often by the hands of another or of a mere servant. So it is with God. He wills that the adversity which is to serve as a

remedy should not come to you immediately from Him, but that sometimes it should come to you even from one inferior to yourself.

APPLICATION. Consequently you must not regard who it is who applies the remedy, but must look rather to Him Who prescribes it, God; and this all the more because it is He Who directs the hand of him who applies it, so that he may not exceed the limits of his duty. But why is it that you entirely forget your Divine Physician, Who orders the medicine, and regard only him who mortifies you and obliges you to remain in this certain place or in that office? No wonder then that you are agitated and even indignant.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy hands have made me and formed me; give me understanding, and I will learn thy commandments.* (Ps. cxviii, 73.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how excellent a remedy for you is each trial of sorrow or of humiliation that comes to you, either immediately from the hand of the Divine Physician or by means of your fellow-men. Until God begins to prove you by tribulations, how prone you are to take complacency in your own self!

APPLICATION. You trust to those desires, those intentions, and those pious affections which you feel in prayer. Alas, when it comes to the proof, you know yourself what a sad lack of courage there is. You at once repine, are disquieted, and lose all submission to the divine will. We do not know how much alloy there is in gold and silver, until they are tried by fire. So in like manner with you, until you are tried *in the way of humiliations*. Therefore thank God if He often reduces you to this state, for the way of afflictions and of humiliations is the safest one to lead you to heaven; but at the same time beseech God to give

you strength to fight manfully in the midst of these trials.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me : that I may learn thy justifications.* (Ps. cxviii, 71.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

UNION WITH ONE ANOTHER

A new commandment I give you that you love one another. (John xiii, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that you are called like all Christians to be a perfect member of the Church. This perfection, observe carefully, is entirely founded in unity of spirit, for the Church should be even as one body endowed with one and the same spirit : *One body and one spirit.* (Ephes. iv, 4.) Therefore the distinctive mark of a true follower of Christ is not piety nor mortification nor modesty, but fraternal charity.

APPLICATION. Can it then be that you make more account of every other virtue than of this, about which the Apostle went so far as to supplicate you ? *I beseech you . . . be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Ephes. iv, 1–3.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor : the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.* (Ps. xl, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that to this unity, so natural and so necessary, the vices that are most contrary are pride, anger, impatience, and indiscreet zeal. Pride, because *among the proud there are always contentions.* (Prov. xiii, 10.) Therefore in the first place, you are recommended by the Apostle (Ephes. ibid.) to practise

internal and external humility: *In all humility.* Anger, because *an angry man stirreth up strife.* (Prov. xxvi, 21.) Then secondly you must needs practise meekness in act and in word. Impatience, which cannot overlook the least offence; therefore in the third place that patience which extinguishes all strife is taught you. In the fourth place, indiscreet zeal in criticising and blaming the actions of others; therefore are you warned to bear the defects of others as you would wish others to bear yours: *Supporting one another in charity.* (Ephes. ibid.)

APPLICATION. Examine whether you have even any of the beginnings of these vices in your heart. Strive to correct them to the utmost, by means of the four opposite virtues spoken of above.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The meek shall inherit the land: and shall delight in abundance of peace.* (Ps. xxxvi, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this unity amongst us may be of different kinds. There is a form of unity, brought about by intrigue, which may be set down as a great and a dangerous pest. Again there may be a kind of natural union, the result of nationality, of relationship, of duties or studies. Such is not in itself blameworthy, provided it does not stand in the way of virtuous unity. These unions do not embrace all, neither are they stable in themselves. The only unity which is really holy and virtuous is that which unites persons from a divine motive, that is, because such is the will of God: *This is my commandment,* (John xv, 12), although some of them may be undeserving of affection.

APPLICATION. Happy are you if you possess this holy bond of union! If you wish it to be a bond of

peace, attend to your own duties and interfere not in that which does not concern you. Peace cannot be preserved where order is disturbed : because, as St. Augustine says, peace is the tranquillity of order.

Affections and resolutions. *Turn away from evil and do good : seek after peace and pursue it.* (Ps. xxxiii, 15.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REMORSE OF CONSCIENCE

Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him. (Matt. v, 25.)

Consider firstly that the enemy here spoken of by our Blessed Lord is your own conscience. You must treat it as you would a powerful enemy and one who has just claims against you. Give him then due satisfaction and settle matters with him, before he conducts you to the tribunal of the judge.

Application. You should so conduct yourself towards the dictates of your own conscience, as not to be condemned by the supreme Judge to pay your debt with all rigour. If you would but bear this truth in mind, you would not so easily despise the remorse of your conscience, which so often speaks only too truly.

Affections and resolutions. *The law of his God is in his heart : and his steps shall not be supplanted.* (Ps. xxxvi, 31.)

Consider secondly that the dictates of your conscience are here called your adversary, not indeed because they are really your enemy, but because regarding only what is for your true good, they are opposed to your disorderly inclinations. Your real

enemy is the allurement and incitement of your own passions and inclinations.

APPLICATION. Therefore *be at agreement quickly with your adversary*, make perfect peace with your conscience and strive to satisfy it quickly *while thou art in the way*. Do not lose time, because it may be that you shall unexpectedly find yourself at the end of your journey. *For after the way*, that is at death, your conscience will be your adversary and will accuse you severely before your Judge, Jesus Christ. He will have regard above all to the accusations of your own conscience, in judging and passing sentence upon you. Neither will your grief then at not having agreed in life with this your adversary be of any avail to you at that tribunal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Remove from me reproach and contempt : because I have sought after thy testimonies.* (Ps. cxviii, 22.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that some wish not to hear the reproaches and importunities of this their adversary. Hence instead of giving him prompt satisfaction, they seek rather to quieten him, to draw him to the views of their own ill-regulated desires by arguments and false pretexts, so that the remorse of their conscience may cease to trouble them.

APPLICATION. Woe to you if you act thus. The voice will notwithstanding make itself heard and will cry out at the tribunal of your Judge. He will condemn you to the prison, and to the prison of fire : *thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing.* This prison must be either hell, or at least purgatory : and the penalty will be either eternal or temporary. How much more severe and bitter will be the suffering than that, which you would have suffered by having

agreed with this adversary of your own conscience during life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath coveted to long for thy justifications at all times.* (Ps. cxviii, 20.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONFIDENCE UNDER TRIALS

Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? (Matt. viii, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that one of the greatest temptations of the spiritual life is the temptation of diffidence, because it seems to us that what we do or suffer for God is all lost. Therefore against this it will help you to consider the words of St. Paul to his disciple Timothy. He says: *I suffer but I am not ashamed.* (2 Tim. i, 12.) He confesses to suffering much, but if he suffers he is not thereby cast down. You think perhaps that the saints being inflamed with love for God did not feel their sufferings? It is not so. They felt them intensely, but they were not overcome by them because they knew well how good the Lord is, to Whom they had given themselves up. *I know whom I have believed.* (Ibid.)

APPLICATION. You feel the sufferings of soul and body and even, it may be, intensely. But wherefore should it not be so? If you did not feel them it would not be suffering for you. If you suffer, it suffices that you be not cast down, but preserve a lively faith and confidence in God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let me not be confounded, O Lord: for I have called upon thee. Let the wicked be ashamed, and be brought down to hell.* (Ps. xxx, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the further words of the Apostle: *I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* What was it that he had committed to God? It was the many sufferings which he had borne for the love of God. He had placed them all in the hands of his Lord. Therefore he was certain that God would most faithfully keep all for him and turn them to his greater profit.

APPLICATION. Spend yourself and be spent, labour, and bear all for love of God. Tell Him that you desire to depend entirely on Him, and leave all thought of yourself to His care. In this way your life is more sure to bear and produce its fullest fruit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My lot is in thy hands. Deliver me out of the hands of my enemies, and from them that persecute me.* (Ps. xxx, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the Apostle says that he has laid up the store of his sufferings, not so as to receive the reward of them in this life, but *against that day*, that is against the day of the particular and universal judgment. For a like day of reward and happiness for the good, and punishment for the bad, there cannot be in this life.

APPLICATION. This then is the day that you should always keep vividly before you to strengthen you. Remember that at the particular judgment He will give to the soul the reward of all that it has suffered for Him, and at the universal judgment He will give back to you the body in which you also suffered for Him. This is that most precious trust of which you can say with the Apostle: *He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The earth trembled*

and was still, when God arose in judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. (Ps. lxxv, 9, 10.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PURITY

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. (Matt. v, 8.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY those words of Jeremias (iv, 14) : *Wash thy heart that thou mayest be saved.* How few indeed those are who thoroughly cleanse their hearts from all sinfulness. Many in the sacrament of confession purify them from sins with which they have soiled them, but few wash their hearts in such a way that no attachment or affection for sin is left in their souls.

APPLICATION. May it not be that you confess, for example, having sought the empty praise of men. Yet you strive not at the same time to root out of your soul the attachment and love, which you retain all the time to that esteem. So to a certain extent you make your soul clean, but you do not cleanse it thoroughly. So too as to dangerous friendships, honours, and amusements. Were it as easy to wash fully the heart, as it is to give it an appearance of cleanliness, it would not be said to Jerusalem, that is to the faithful soul, *Wash thy heart . . . that thou mayest be saved.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* (Ps. l, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the sign of not having cleansed fully the heart from wickedness, is that hurtful thoughts abide too easily in you. If the thoughts that lodge therein were gravely sinful, your heart would not

be even clean. But if you have not harboured evil thoughts you have harboured harmful and dangerous ones, that is, those that are not matter of grave offence against God, but that may little by little lead on to such. For example, thoughts of vainglory, of worldly pomp, and of amusement, which at any rate show that your heart even if it be clean is not thoroughly so. Remember at the same time that evil thoughts often pass through the minds of all people, and are not always an argument of any attachment to evil. The sign of attachment to evil is their being allowed to abide there. *How long shall hurtful thoughts abide in thee?* It is in this voluntary admission of them that lies all the mischief.

APPLICATION. Examine in how far you keep your mind free not only from thoughts that are bad, but from harmful and dangerous ones too. Then will you learn how to cleanse yourself also from your predominating attachments.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes are ever towards the Lord.* (Ps. xxiv, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what you have to do in order to cleanse your heart from all attachment to evil. Strive to conceive a vehement hatred of all that is sinful. A feeble hatred is not sufficient to prevent our turning back, to love that which has so great a force as to wrest to itself our corrupt nature. Therefore it is necessary to hate it intensely. So acted Queen Esther when she detested the diadem she wore on her head, that she might never become attached to it: *Thou knowest that I abominate the sign of my pride and glory which is upon my head.* (Esth. xiv, 16.) For she knew that if she did not sincerely hate it, she would come little by little to love it more than she should, and would

thus resemble the Israelites who by retaining affection for the onions of Egypt came at last to do what they had never done in Egypt, namely, worship their idols.

APPLICATION. You, who have in holy baptism renounced the devil and all his works and pomps, must beware of retaining any undue affection for the things of the world if you would not be drawn to worship them, that is to fall into mortal sin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, my portion, I have said, I would keep thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 57.)

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
WOLVES IN SHEEPS' CLOTHING

(Read Matt. vii, 15–21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY who those are, who seem to you to be harmless lambs but who really are ravening wolves ready to devour you. They are in the first place those irregular appetites of self-love which nestle within you and deceitfully urge you to seek for honours, ease, and the gratification of your natural inclinations by avoiding humiliations and crosses. Next they are exteriorly friends and companions, who by their bad example and counsels persuade and entice you to live less strictly, to make no account of those who have authority over you, and to live a life of ease and of independence.

APPLICATION. Instead of being on your guard against such and flying from them as if they were wolves, have you not up to the present time drawn near to them, receiving and treating them as if they were faithful and your best friends ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man. Send forth thy light and thy truth.* (Ps. xlii, 1, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is difficult to detect the deceptions of these desires of self-love, and of such companions. They entice you to evil under the appearance of good. They persuade you to seek renown and honour, so that you may work more efficiently for the good of your neighbour ; to seek ease and recreation so that your health and strength may not be weakened ; to neglect your spiritual exercises so as not to fatigue your mind overmuch. Through such apparently good motives, so flattering to self-love, how many are there not, who have come to abandon virtue and to embrace a life of vice !

APPLICATION. You desire never again to be deceived by these ravening wolves disguised in sheeps' clothing. It behoves you then to set yourself to know them, and to discover their deceits by the light of faith and of the gospel truths. Consider also the very grave harm which you have in the past drawn from yielding to your self-love, and conforming yourself to the example of bad companions.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With the holy, thou wilt be holy : and with the innocent man thou wilt be innocent.* (Ps. xvii, 26.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in order the more to guard yourself against the deceits of bad example and of disorderly inclinations, to secure eternal salvation and escape eternal damnation, it is not enough to profess openly a good Christian life if the exercise of real virtue be wanting. In like manner it suffices not, to save a tree from being cut down and burned, that it should bear an abundance of beautiful leaves. *Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.* (Matt. vii, 21.)

APPLICATION. As to your life in general and your actions in particular, you must not therefore make rules for yourself merely from the example of others. Still less must you let yourself be guided by the inclinations of self-love. You must regulate yourself in all things according to the will of God, set forth in His commandments and in the teachings of His holy gospel.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord: and thy law is my meditation.* (Ps. cxviii, 174.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JOY IN SUFFERING

Be glad in that day and rejoice; for behold your reward is great in heaven. (Luke vi, 23.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that it is not without reason that our Lord charges you to rejoice and be glad, in the midst of the afflictions you bear for the love of Him. For they win for you such an immense reward in the glory of paradise, where you will rejoice in all the good which constitutes the happiness of God Himself: *I am thy reward exceeding great.* (Gen. xv, 1.) The husbandman rejoices greatly in the labours and fatigues, which he undergoes in the time of sowing, because of the fruit he hopes to reap at that of the harvest.

APPLICATION. Ought you not then to rejoice much more than you do in suffering these afflictions for God which come to you from illnesses, pains, mortifications and even persecutions? In paradise these sufferings will gain you a reward of glory, the least degree of which would counterbalance all the punishment of the damned, and would be sufficient to extinguish all the

torments of hell. You know not how to rejoice in your afflictions because you keep your thoughts fixed merely on the evil you are suffering. Strive to think of the reward that they will bring if you bear them for the love of Jesus. Thus you will have a great motive to rejoice and to be glad in the very act of suffering *in that day*, as the saints did. For they *went and wept, casting their seeds, but coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves.* (Ps. cxxv, 6.) *They wept* because our sensitive and weak nature cannot but feel the evils which it suffers; but *they rejoiced* both in mind and spirit by reason of the hope of the fruit to come.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Going, they went and wept, casting their seed, but returning they shall come with joy carrying their sheaves.* (Ps. cxxv, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in the gospels the glory of paradise is called by many names, namely, reward, crown, and inheritance. Here our Lord uses the word reward, *for your reward is very great in heaven* (Matt. v, 12), to make you understand the certainty of attaining it. For you are never more sure of gaining the glory of paradise than when willingly suffering in this life, in order to become like to Jesus Who suffered and was crucified for you. *Whom he foreknew he predestined to be made conformable to the image of his son.* (Rom. viii, 29.) There is no assurance of reward greater than that which is due to a recompense for labour, which is not denied even by men. In other good actions there may be a mixture of self-love, but in these of suffering for God, this certainly is not to be found.

APPLICATION. Can you then doubt that God will give you the reward which He has promised you? *Which God who lieth not hath promised.* (Titus i, 2.)

God is not as a man that he should lie. (Num. xxiii, 19.) And is not a reward, so great and so certain, enough to animate you to suffer willingly and gladly in this life?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever, for the reward.* (Ps. cxviii, 112.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what labours people endure in the world, in courts, and elsewhere, in the hope of a reward which for the most part they never obtain. And even when they fully attain their ambition, it is always, at best, of earth and earthly, that is to say, their reward is a good which is not a true good, not certain, and not lasting. Not true because it cannot satisfy and because it is always mixed with bitterness; not secure because it can be so easily lost; not lasting because at death it perishes entirely.

APPLICATION. You on the contrary may have to suffer for Christ, and that even severely, but it is only for a short time and the reward will have no end. It will far exceed all you have to suffer, it will be full, containing a good which will render you perfectly happy. In the midst of all your sufferings endeavour to think of heaven which you will reach before long. With that thought in your mind, you will have greater motive for rejoicing and being glad at the prospect of reward, than for being sad and sorrowful because of your afflictions: *Behold your reward.* Behold it and contemplate it as if it were now present.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *As for me, I will appear before thy sight in justice: I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear.* (Ps. xvi, 15.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DUTIES TO GOD, OUR NEIGHBOUR, OURSELVES

Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. vi, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that by the mouth of the prophet Micheas (vi, 8) God requires three things of you for your true good. The first regards yourself: *Do judgment*, that is exercise a rigorous judgment on yourself by a careful examination of your actions, pronounce a faithful sentence, and inflict due penalty.

APPLICATION. Examine carefully your actions, your words, your thoughts and your most secret affections. Then pass sentence on yourself, but let it be impartial. Oh how easy it is for you to flatter yourself, to excuse your defects, to accuse those who are not in fault at all! Finally impose upon yourself a penalty which may compensate for the wrong done, and which will serve to restrain you from it in future. If you will judge yourself in this manner, you will not then be judged by God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I meditated in the night with my own heart: and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit.* (Ps. lxxvi, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY your next duty, *Love mercy*, and this regards your neighbour. You must show your mercy by ceasing to criticise his defects, by condoning his faults, by compassionating and helping him in every occurrence as far as lies in your power.

APPLICATION. Notice here that the prophet says we are *to love mercy*. For if you truly love to show mercy, you will know how to find out your

neighbour's needs and give him prompt help, according as opportunities allow you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To the righteous a light is risen up in darkness: he is merciful, and compassionate and just.* (Ps. cxi, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY your principal duty, and that is in regard to God. *To walk solicitous with thy God.* Throughout the whole course of this your mortal pilgrimage you must never separate yourself from Him. Cleave to Him and wherever He goes always remain in His company even when He leads to Calvary. Do not be like those who cruelly abandon Him when they meet with the cross, and follow Him only to Thabor in the time of His consolation and of His glory.

APPLICATION. Examine yourself and see if you are careful to obey God, to honour and to please Him. Be careful above all not to lose Him by reason of the many insidious enemies who would rob you of Him. This solicitude is praiseworthy and necessary, but it must be accompanied by a distrust in yourself and by an entire confidence in God. He will never fail to give you strength to follow Him, and to resist all that would take Him from you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have chosen the way of truth: the judgments I have not forgotten. I have cleaved to thy testimonies, O Lord.* (Ps. cxviii, 30, 31.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GAINING HEAVEN

The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away. (Matt. xi, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the kingdom of heaven is not merely given but is to be acquired by force of arms. For this reason it was that Job said, *The life of man upon earth is a warfare.* (Job vii, 1.) Do you then expect to take it without any effort? This is not possible. Consider how much labour and penance, and even blood, it cost the saints. Behold the very King of glory, what has He not done and suffered in order to merit it, not for Himself, for it was already His, but for all of us? *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory?* (Luke xxiv, 26.)

APPLICATION. What have you done up to the present moment to follow the example of Christ? He intended to inspire and to encourage you by His own great sufferings to fight manfully to gain so great a kingdom.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear; if battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident.* (Ps. xxvi, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the kingdom of heaven must be acquired by way of warfare, and by that of violent offensive. *The violent bear it away.* You must use this violence against yourself and even towards God. Against yourself in the total denial of self, combating and resisting your disorderly desires.

Towards God, make use of it in prayer as if it were necessary for you to bear away heaven from His hand as it were by force, and this you can do only by means of prayer. The soldier who makes an assault does violence to himself by forcing himself onwards, and does violence to those who try to repulse him.

APPLICATION. In this way you must do violence to God in prayer, and to yourself by resisting your ill-regulated and disorderly inclinations.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee, O Lord, will I cry: and I will make my supplication to my God.* (Ps. xxix, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that although you possibly possess not generosity of soul enough to use all the violence that is needed towards yourself and towards God, heaven may still be yours, and after this manner. Let yourself as it were be pushed and driven forward by the force of others. Bear in peace for the love of God all the violence of adversity, of persecutions, and of infirmities which God sends you Himself or through others to make you sure of heaven. He who enters a building where there is a great crowd of people, and allows himself to be carried along by the impetus of the crowd, goes forward as rapidly as he who uses great force to make his way.

APPLICATION. You are weak, perhaps, in spirit and cannot of yourself use the violence that is needful in order to enter heaven. Let then the infirmities, the afflictions and persecutions, which perhaps at times fall heavily on your shoulders, supply and help you to enter into an eternal reward.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor and needy; help me, O God. Thou art my helper and deliverer.* (Ps. lxix, 6.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE REWARD OF SUFFERINGS

In the world you shall have distress ; but have confidence, I have overcome the world. (John xvi, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY why God permits the devil to assault you, and why you are tried by afflictions. It is to prove whether you really love Him. When all goes as you would wish, you easily tell God that you love Him. But let yourself be tried by the rebellion of your senses, by some infirmity, by some humiliation, by some interior desolation, and behold you are immediately quite other than what you were. If Satan derided all Job's virtue until he had been tried, how then can you make great account of yours ?

APPLICATION. Let then God prove you as He will. For the time of this life is a time of trial. *The life of man on this earth is a temptation,* as the version of the Septuagint renders it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Our heart hath not turned back ; neither hast thou turned away our steps from thy way. For thou hast humbled us in the place of affliction.* (Ps. xliii, 19, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that if you stand firm under this probation you will be blessed, and will receive a crown. *He shall receive the crown of life,* as St. James tells us. (i, 12.) What glory will be yours when in the day of your triumph the Lord places the crown on your head ! Men have in times past fought and striven their utmost to obtain a crown of laurel which withers and perishes in a short day.

APPLICATION. Will you not then fight against the evil inclinations of the flesh, against the dictates of

the world, and against the assaults of the devil, in order to obtain the imperishable crown of glory: *the never fading crown of glory?* It is called *a crown of life*, because it is never subject to death.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever for the reward.* (Ps. cxviii, 112.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this precious crown of life is certain and cannot fail to be yours. For God has promised it to you, and that many times over, in the holy scriptures: *Which God hath promised.* (James, ib.) You would believe some prince were he to promise you some precious object as a reward for running a race, even though you had never seen it. Will you not then believe the promise of God also? If He but once showed you that crown which is destined for you, what courage it would give you, what enthusiasm, what joy! But for your greater good and merit He wills not to show it to you.

APPLICATION. You must then have great faith in God. You must not wish to see your crown till it is fully finished. The greater your sufferings shall be, so much the richer and more beautiful will it be, for it is not only a gift, but likewise a recompense of merit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast set on his head a crown of precious stones. He asked life of thee: and thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever.* (Ps. xx, 4, 5.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ALL LOSS BUT JESUS CHRIST

He that followeth me walketh not in darkness. (John viii, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how clear was the light of faith and of the Gospel doctrine, which shone in the mind of the Apostle, when in this light all his greatest gains seemed to him to be but loss. *I count all things to be loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ.* (Phil. iii, 8.) So it is with all who are illuminated as was the Apostle. How they wonder that in the past they could have followed the maxims of worldly people, in valuing empty and useless emulation, points of precedence and vain applause!

APPLICATION. If after you have begun to lead a more fervent Christian life, you are not surprised at your having even up to the present sought after those things, that you once gave up for the love of Christ, it is a sign that you are not living by that light. *The light of justice hath not shined unto us.* (Wisdom v, 6.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Better is a little to the just than the great riches of the wicked.* (Ps. xxxvi, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Apostle not only reckoned as loss those things he had counted gain, but went further still and regarded all things loss that were not Jesus Christ; namely, nobility of birth, eloquence, talents, and all other such gifts. He had formed this judgment of estimating as loss all things which the world prizes most highly, by the light of that wisdom which he acquired in the school of Jesus Christ. The Master had made known to

him that whoever does not renounce himself, and all that is his, cannot be His follower. *He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.* (Luke xiv, 33.)

APPLICATION. Strive to attain this wisdom, which is of the very highest. If you attain to it, not only will the things you once possessed in the world, but even all that could possibly be yours, appear to you as loss. Christ poor and naked upon the Cross will take the place of all these things for you, and will satisfy you more than all else.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If riches abound, set not your heart upon them.* (Ps. lxi, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what estimate the Apostle made of all the good things of this life when he added: *I count them but as dung* (ib.). For he saw the vast difference there is between the things of this world and the things of his Saviour Jesus Christ. The good things of this world are dung from their very foulness, if they belong to the concupiscence of the flesh. If they belong to the concupiscence of the eyes which is avarice, they are dung from their sordidness. If they belong to the pride of life which is ambition, they are dung because they so soon wither away and perish.

APPLICATION. The Apostle rejects all things of earth in order to possess Jesus Christ. How then could you think of leaving Christ, and not keeping close to Him, in order merely that you might have the things of earth, which are only so much dung?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How sweet are thy words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth.* (Ps. cxviii, 103.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST

He that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it. (Luke ix, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that every true Christian should be a soldier of Jesus Christ. He must combat either as the martyrs did against tyrants, as the Doctors of the Church did against errors, or as all the faithful must do against the desires of the flesh and the assaults of the evil one. You may think that these three kinds of combat do not concern you, but it is not so. For if it be not always necessary to be in action, it is always necessary to be prepared for the fight. For this reason the Apostle St. Paul does not say *fight* but *labour*. *Labour as a good soldier of Christ.* (2 Tim. ii, 3.) Soldiers are not idle in time of peace.

APPLICATION. Though perhaps not liable now to be persecuted by tyrants, yet you must imitate the martyrs of Christ by preparation, by keeping alive in yourself the faith as much as if you had to defend it before a public tribunal. Despise life, hate and mortify your body, even as if you were now about to pass to a better life. But if you are set upon the love of ease, if you cherish too delicately your body, how can you boast of being a soldier of Christ ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do manfully and let thy heart take courage.* (Ps. xxvi, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it may never be yours to fight against errors as did the Doctors of

the Church. All the same, as a soldier of Christ you should be prepared and well instructed in your religion. Thus you will be able to fight against the many false maxims which are heard even among Christian people against the truths and practice of the gospel, as for example that it is shameful to forgive your enemies, to be too yielding, to control yourself, to humble yourself, and similar principles.

APPLICATION. Can you profess yourself to be a soldier of Christ, and yet not show yourself ready to disapprove of and to condemn such errors, which are spread by the followers of the world against the gospel truths taught by Jesus Christ? *Labour as a good soldier of Christ.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give me understanding, and I will search thy law; and I will keep it with my whole heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 34.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you have not only to fight against your evil inclinations, that are allied to the devil, when they assault you, but that if there is a little truce, you have to stand like a true soldier, always with your arms in your hand. When you think yourself most secure, then must you stand most of all on your guard. For God sometimes allows you to be assaulted most fiercely in order to punish you for your negligence. Actual fighting is never absolutely continuous and uninterrupted for any soldier, but the bearing of labour is always so.

APPLICATION. In order then to comport yourself as a good soldier, you must not fight as a mercenary whose only aim is his pay. You have voluntarily entered the service of your King, having the one aim, whilst fighting against the enemies of God, to please Him alone. He watches from heaven how His faithful

follower bears himself in his dangers: *that he may please him to whom he hath engaged himself.* (2 Tim. ii, 4.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength: Praising, I will call upon the Lord: and I shall be saved from my enemies.* (Ps. xvii, 2, 4.)

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE UNJUST STEWARD

(Read Luke xvi, 1–9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the steward spoken of in to-day's Gospel, fearing to be dismissed and punished by his master for his careless management, gave himself to serious thought about his present state, and how he could best provide for the needs of the future. And you, who have wasted so many gifts of God, fear you not the irreparable evil and punishment which is impending over you at the day of reckoning? How often have you not, merely for your bodily pleasure, to gratify your irregular desires, for your self-love, diverted so many gifts of soul and body, of nature and of grace, which God has bestowed upon you that you might spend them in His service and employ them to His glory?

APPLICATION. For such wrong then so basely done to God, you know that you must soon render a most strict account. Do you then never think of it, or strive to make reparation for so much evil done? Oh how true indeed it is that *the children of this world are wiser*!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still, when God arose in judgment.* (Ps. lxxv, 9, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the ingenious expedient made use of by the steward, to his own profit indeed, but to the loss of his master, who nevertheless praised his steward's foresight in making friends betimes with his master's debtors by remitting part of their debts, so that, after his dismissal, they would give him wherewith to live. *How much dost thou owe my lord? A hundred barrels of oil. Write fifty.* You on the contrary cannot inflict loss on God by providing for your own advantage, but you do Him grievous wrong by injuring yourself. Why then do you neglect those means, by which you may provide for all the necessities of your last moments, to your own profit and happiness, and at the same time to the glory of God?

APPLICATION. Consider attentively how much worldly men fatigue and spend themselves for temporal interests, how much they labour that they may not lose what they already possess, how much they work in order to gain what they ambition, and how much they strive to provide for all their future possible needs. Yet these earthly things all pass speedily away and all are ended at death. Blessed are you if you study and strive as much to acquire and secure the true treasures of heaven, which will never end!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I thought upon the days of old: and I had in my mind the eternal years.* (Ps. lxxvi, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that life is short, and the time of death uncertain, and that soon it may surprise you! And then, *now thou canst be steward no longer.* Then you will have no more time to adjust your accounts, or to accumulate merits of good works, in

order to compensate for the waste you have made. So many gifts were received from God in the course of your life, so much light, so many inspirations, and so much good example.

APPLICATION. For all these must you give a most strict account at the moment of death; according to the solemn words of the gospel: *Unto whomsoever much is given of him much shall be required.* (Luke xii, 48.) Be up then and doing, for the time is near at hand when thou canst be steward no longer.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart is troubled within me: and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fear and trembling are come upon me.* (Ps. liv. 5, 6.)

MONDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

MERCIFULNESS

Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful. (Luke vi, 36.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that true mercifulness, by which you should resemble your divine Father, is not that quality which comes from simple tenderness of sentiment and compassion for the distress of your neighbour, but is that which arises from the virtue of charity, which moves you to help him from love of God. When the affection of compassion is awakened in you from this motive, then your mercy is complete and perfect. For you not only desire to assuage the distress of others but you also wish to feel them and to share them. This is the mercy which God has shown towards you. For whilst helping you in your infirmities, He willed at the same time in His humanity to realise the sentiments of true compassion for you: *It behoved Him in all things*

to be made like unto His brethren that He might become a merciful High-Priest. (Heb. ii, 17.)

APPLICATION. It is then this complete and perfect mercifulness that you should exercise towards your neighbour. Help him for the love of God, and feel his sorrows as if they were your own.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.* (Ps. xl, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you should not only exercise this mercy and compassion towards your friends and your relatives, but also towards the unworthy, towards strangers, and also towards your enemies, for whom naturally you would not feel compassion and pity. Thus will your mercifulness be the more perfect and more like the divine mercy, which so intensely pities and helps the sinful and those who are enemies of God. Do you not notice that Christ when He bids you imitate the mercifulness of God, calls Him by the name of Father? *Be ye merciful therefore as your Father is merciful.* For God most tenderly pities His children and He helps them to the uttermost, even when they are unruly and proud.

APPLICATION. How often, instead of feeling pity and compassion for the evils which you perceive your enemies and unworthy persons to suffer, you have rather rejoiced in their misfortunes! If you cannot sympathise with them with a tender affection, at least try to help and aid them with your prayers, for the love of God our Lord. For, when you were most unworthy and ungrateful, He has shown you such mercifulness in sympathising with all your afflictions and alleviating them, at the cost of His blood.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath distributed,*

he hath given to the poor: his justice remaineth for ever and ever. (Ps. cxi, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that of all the divine virtues, Christ expressly proposes in the gospels this virtue of mercifulness in particular for your imitation. For it is the one that will make you most resemble God. The mercy of God, as seen in its effects, may be said to be the greatest virtue of all, because it moved Him to redeem the whole human race with His blood. *According to his mercy, he saved us.* (Titus iii, 5.)

APPLICATION. And for you also it should be the greatest virtue. For the exercise of mercifulness towards one's neighbour for the love of God is true charity. It unites you to God and to your neighbour, and gives you a large field in which to exercise towards those who are most afflicted, many acts of virtue, without any danger of self interest or of self love. Do you not feel attracted to the love of this virtue, in order to become more like unto your heavenly Father?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is in his holy temple: the Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes look on the poor man; his eyelids examine the sons of men. The Lord trieth the just and the wicked.* (Ps. x, 5, 6.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OUR FUTURE LOT

Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven. (Matt. vi, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY those words of Ecclesiastes (xi, 3), *If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be,* and that you are the tree here spoken of. If you be cut down by the sickle of death and fall to the south

there will you remain; but if you fall to the north, there too must you in like manner remain. Never more will there be any hope of your changing place. Either for ever a prince on his throne, or ever a slave in chains; either for ever rejoicing, or always tormented; either for ever glorified, or for ever disgraced.

APPLICATION. Are you not moved at the thought of these different destinies? You bestow much thought and reflection so as to secure, or at least not to lose, some position, or some comfort, which will be all over in a few days. Do you then think so little about which of these two eternal destinies is to be yours, and that in so short a time?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The death of the wicked is very evil.* (Ps. xxxiii, 22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that if you are at all anxious to know to which side you will then fall, you must watch and see to which side you now lean. When a tree is cut down it falls to that side to which before it inclined. If it inclines to the south, it will fall to the south; if it inclines to the north, it will fall to the north.

APPLICATION. That which causes you like the tree to bend towards one side rather than another, is the weight of your inclinations and of your affections. If these make you bend towards the chilly north of worldliness, O how justly you may fear for your future lot. For there are not a few who, turning their affections to the things of earth, have at death met the most terrible fate.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments I have not forgotten.* (Ps. cxviii, 30.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you are, if you wish, still in a position to choose the right direction by doing violence to your evil inclinations and to all your irregular affections. Do not however delay, because habits are like a tree, inasmuch as the older they grow the harder to change they become.

APPLICATION. Begin by turning your heart to God, your thoughts to eternal things, and care not too much for transitory things. Thus you may hope at death to enjoy a happy lot. You sincerely wish to secure your eternal happiness? Why then pay so much attention to that which is unworthy of you, and which places you in danger of losing it? You can never understand enough what a difference the force of habits, whether good or bad, which you have formed in life, will make at the approach of death.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set before me for a law the way of thy justifications, O Lord: and I will always seek after it.* (Ps. cxviii, 33.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE IDOLS OF OUR HEART

Jesus seeing their thoughts said: Why do you think evil in your hearts? (Matt. ix, 4.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what we read in Isaias (xix, 1), *Behold the Lord will . . enter Egypt and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence*, and the interpretation of some that when Jesus Christ, hidden under the cloud of His humanity, entered as a little child into Egypt, all the idols of that country were thrown down and fell to the earth.

APPLICATION. You may look upon your own heart also as a land of Egypt, where as many idols

reign as there are ill-regulated affections which you worship. In this Egypt, too, God does not disdain to enter under the cloud of the sacramental accidents, not indeed in order to save His own life from the sword of Herod, but to save your life, and that every time you communicate. And are you not amazed at this His entrance? Are you not moved to do Him honour?

Affections and resolutions. *In God is my salvation and my glory: he is the God of my help, and my hope is in God.* (Ps. lxi, 8.)

Consider secondly that all the idols of Egypt were moved at the presence of the Lord: *Before the face of God.* How much more just then is it that the sinful affections of your heart should likewise be moved, and should fall to the ground in the presence of the Lord, and before the divine example that is given you in this blessed sacrament of love. An idol in your heart is the vice of pride; an idol is your anger and your impatience; another one is your excessive love of your reputation and of doing your own will. Now how can it be that all these idols stand erect and firm, and that they do not fall down at seeing your God so greatly humiliated for you in the host, in seeing Him bearing for you with invincible meekness the insults He receives under the sacred species. For you He submits Himself in all obedience to His ministers, even though they be unworthy, descending from the bosom of the divine Father at the mere call of their voice.

Application. Is it not therefore just and reasonable that these your idols should fall down, and that Jesus should receive in your heart the recognition and the triumph He received in Egypt?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath had regard to the prayer of the humble ; and he hath not despised their petition.* (Ps. ci, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the prophet does not say that the images of Egypt were struck and cast down by force by the Lord, but that they themselves were moved and fell down at the sight of the true God. So in a similar manner must the sins and evil inclinations of your heart fall. You must not expect that the Lord will cast them down by force, but you yourself must strive that they should be moved by your own good will, and thus fall to the earth, offering to our Lord out of love this spontaneous homage.

APPLICATION. Make therefore all your evil affections fall to the earth of your own free will. Otherwise your idols will become more hardened, and even less docile than those idols of stone which rendered Him such glory in Egypt.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will freely sacrifice to thee, and will give praise, O God, to thy name : because it is good.* (Ps. liii, 8.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CROWN OF VICTORY

He that shall persevere to the end he shall be saved. (Matt. x, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in order to be crowned you must fight against your own disorderly inclinations. For the crown of glory is prepared for holiness and for perfection, and is not attained by the performance of devotions and mortifications and fastings done at our own caprice. It is gained by the perfect victory over oneself, all other things

being merely helps or means to arrive at this victory.

Application. Of what value will these external acts be to you if interiorly through untamed passions you are ever thinking yourself better than others, judging them, being upset at every slightest word, unwilling to submit and obey, seeking yourself in everything ? It is not in this way the crown is won.

Affections and resolutions. *My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 3.)

Consider secondly that, in order to be crowned, it is not enough merely to strive, but necessary to strive constantly. St. Augustine says our efforts must be indefatigable as long as we are in the arena of this life. You must never lay aside the lance from out of your hand.

Application. If at times you receive some little hurt, have but patience. God does not bid you to crush your appetites in such a manner that they will not make themselves felt any more; but He does wish you to strive without any thought of truce. *Strive for justice for thy soul even unto death.* (Ecclus. iv, 33.)

Affections and resolutions. *Deliver my soul from the fear of the enemy. Thou hast protected me from the assembly of the malignant : from the multitude of the workers of iniquity.* (Ps. lxiii, 2, 3.)

Consider thirdly that this continuous strife against your evil inclinations should not alarm you. If you give them any truce they do but gain strength. Moreover these spiritual combats are dissimilar from all material warfare. In the latter the longer you fight, the more tired, the weaker you become ; whilst in the former, the longer you combat, the stronger

you grow. For divine grace which is your only strength is always increased therein.

APPLICATION. The weapons then with which you are to fight are distrust of self, confidence in God, and prayer. Distrust of yourself will cause you not to presume. You will proceed with reflection and circumspection, and if sometimes you fall, you will then humble yourself. You will not give way to disquiet, being convinced that of yourself you can do nothing. Confidence in God will result in God's giving you the victory, which He alone can give and which He so much desires to give you. Prayer will ensure your receiving all the help you need. In the Olympian games the prize was given by the judge, but he gave no help to the wrestlers; whereas God promises you the crown of glory, and gives you the help of His grace, provided you ask it faithfully and continually.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They are many that make war against me; but I will trust in thee.* (Ps. lv, 3–4.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE DEATH OF THE GOOD AND THE BAD

I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be. (John xiv, 3.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that though death comes to all men without distinction, there is nevertheless a great difference between the death of a fervent Christian and the death of a lax one. The death of the latter is called an awakening: *when he shall sleep he shall open his eyes and find nothing* (Job xxvii, 19),

but the death of the fervent soul is called a rest: *that they may rest from their labours.* (Apoc. xiv, 13.) The death of a lax or sinful soul is an awakening, because death opens the eyes of the mind. He sees disappearing as a dream those satisfactions which he allowed his flesh; vanishing those liberties he took contrary to his conscience; vanishing the praise he sought with so great offence to God: *He shall open his eyes and find nothing.* (Job, ib.) The death of the fervent, on the contrary, is a rest, because it puts an end to his anxieties, to his penances, to his crosses; he sees himself despoiled of nothing by death but what he had already despised for God's sake and had changed into a treasury of merits: *their works follow them.* (Apoc. xiv, 13.)

APPLICATION. What will death be for you? A repose or an awakening? If you would die the death of the fervent soul, you must live the life of the fervent.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me.* (Ps. liv, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the death of the lax soul is an awakening, not only because of what he sees vanishing from him, but much more because of all he sees appearing before him. Wherever he turns, everything makes him fear and tremble. Within him his conscience is troubled and afflicts him for his sins. Near him he sees the devil assailing him and by his suggestions increasing his alarm. Above him he discerns the Judge already approaching to sentence him; and below him chastisements and punishments which he has deserved. O sad and dreadful awakening! The fervent soul on the contrary is but little troubled by his sins, because he has confessed them and has wept over them. He little fears the devil for he is

under the fatherly care of his God. He awaits with longing the coming of the Judge, from Whom he will receive the reward of his faithful service, saying with the Apostle : *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice.* (2 Tim. iv, 7–8.)

APPLICATION. If at the present moment death came upon you, could you also say the same and with the same confidence as the Apostle ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints.* (Ps. cxv, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the saddest awakening of the lax and sinful soul, and the sweetest joy of the fervent, will be what immediately follows the moment of death. The fervent will then find himself carried to rest in the bosom of God, to receive the congratulations of all the choirs of the blessed at having triumphed over the flesh, the world, and the devil. But if one dies in a state of laxness, he will see himself condemned to an awakening of most intense punishment and suffering. If by a supreme act of mercy he is happy enough to die in the grace of God, how long and bitter an awakening must he undergo ! He must expiate in a prison of fire all his debts, even to the last farthing, with pains far greater than any he ever felt in this world, and perhaps for years and years.

APPLICATION. Now reflect a little. See if it be worth while, for the sake of those momentary satisfactions which the tepid and sinful soul so eagerly pursues, to be obliged to suffer such an awakening at the moment of death. Rather, by leading a more mortified life at present, enjoy then the repose of the fervent.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him : and on them that hope in his mercy, To deliver their souls from death.* (Ps. xxxii, 18, 19.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Be of good heart ; it is I ; fear ye not. (Matt. xiv, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how justly he is called blessed, who places all his hope and confidence in Jesus Christ Who is our true Saviour, not in word only but in truth also, for he places it in Him Who is supreme power, supreme wisdom and supreme goodness. Therefore He is not only able, and knows how, to grant us every good gift, but He most intensely longs to do so. He however cannot be called blessed who puts his trust in men; rather on the contrary is he unfortunate. For men rarely desire to do good to one another, and when they do so desire, either they do not know how to do it or they have not the power.

APPLICATION. Oh you who have looked to your fellow-men in the hope of some worthless benefit, and often have not obtained it, begin at once to have recourse to Jesus Christ your Saviour. Place all your hope in Him because by so doing you will be blessed.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, art my hope.* (Ps. xc, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is not so very easy after all to have this hope and confidence in God and in Jesus Christ. It requires strength to begin to hope, and strength also not to cease to hope. Many never begin to trust, because, frightened at the sight

of their own miseries, they think themselves unworthy to receive great graces from God. Many others begin but do not persevere for their hope seems to be in vain, either because God makes them await His graces too long or because He bestows them secretly.

APPLICATION. Do not you ever act thus. Be always strong in hope, and turn to God with confidence amid aridities or consolations alike, in adversity or prosperity, and so shall you obtain every grace to make you blessed. You cannot please God more, or do Him greater honour, than by trusting in Him however weak and poor you are yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will always hope, and will add to all Thy praise.* (Ps. lxx, 14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it comes easy to him who has placed all his trust in God to despise the things of this world. For Jesus crucified suffices for him ; He is above all ; He makes up for all, and consoles more than all. Consequently, he who possesses this firm and true hope in his heart, regards the things of this world as really worthless, reckoning them all as deceitful and foolish.

APPLICATION. In what esteem do you hold worldly things ? If you have really set your hope on Jesus Christ set not your heart upon these other things. Thus they will not seduce you as they have so many others, who will discover their error when all too late and will cry out : *We have erred from the way of truth and the light of justice hath not shined upon us.* (Wisd. v, 6.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my hope O Lord, from my youth.* (Ps. lxx, 5.)

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
CHRIST WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM
(Read Luke xix, 41–47.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the ruin of unhappy Jerusalem, so bitterly wept over by our Blessed Lord, was to come upon her because she had not profited by His coming in order to save and sanctify her. The same condemnation is renewed in those souls, who refuse the visits which God secretly makes to them to enrich them with His gifts. These visits are the voices and inspirations in the heart, the lights and the impulses by which He stimulates souls to forsake evil and embrace virtue. *Behold I stand at the door and knock.* (Apoc. iii, 20.) How blessed is the soul that receives Him! Equally unhappy is that soul which refuses the visit and will not answer to the knock.

APPLICATION. And you, no matter what your state of life, who have been so often favoured by God's visits to you to make you less worldly and more holy, how have you received them?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O that my ways may be directed to keep thy justifications.* (Ps. cxviii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the injury you incur if you neglect to receive these visits. The first is that God will not favour you any more with His strong inspirations, but will visit you more rarely or less perceptibly. If then you do not profit by His loving visits, what good can you expect when you find yourself deprived of these great helps? For, when they cease entirely, you will be unable to conceive even as much as a good thought in your mind. The other injury you incur is, that despoiled of this assistance you may

be left to the mercy of your ill-regulated appetites, and in the power of the enemies of your soul.

APPLICATION. Consider seriously how these same enemies, seeing you despoiled of the most powerful help of heaven, *will surround you* with ever stronger and more incessant temptations. *They shall cast you down to the ground* by even the most shameful falls, making you go from bad to worse and pass from voluntary venial sins to the gravest mortal ones. How many of these most grievous falls are seen, even among those who were formerly pious and even holy!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My enemies have trodden on me all the day long; for they are many that make war against me.* (Ps. lv, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY on the other hand the profit that he receives who accepts God's visits and promptly responds to His inspirations, placing himself in His hands and conforming himself to the divine will. He is like the spouse in the Canticle, who said: *My soul melted when he spoke.* (Cant. v, 6.) He lets himself be guided entirely by the voice of God without retaining in himself anything of his own will.

APPLICATION. If you but do the same you will be able to keep God within your heart. *If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him* (Apoc. iii, 20) and by His presence He will protect you from temptations, and from all the assaults of the enemy. He will feed you with spiritual consolations. He will encourage you by the illumination of your mind. He will make you prepare for Him a table of choice and virtuous works: *I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* (Apoc. iii, 20.) Oh what immense benefits are enjoyed by him who hears the call of God, and

promptly accepts His visits ! And how many there are who, by responding to the voice of God which invited them to some heroic act of virtue, have risen to a sublime degree of sanctity, like St. John Gualbert and many others.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* (Ps. xciii, 19.)

MONDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT

They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. (Matt. xxiv, 30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the universal judgment is ordained, among other reasons, in order that each man may know the good or the evil there has been amongst men. Consequently, all must appear before that great tribunal, and all must be manifested that now lies hidden within us of thought, of word, or of actions. At such a revelation how the world will be confounded at the mistakes it has made, despising those who should have been exalted and exalting those who should have been despised !

APPLICATION. Why therefore do you now fear the judgments of the world so much ? What does it matter that all the world blame you if you be praised by God, or that all the world praise you if you be blamed by God ? Reflect now as to what you will appear in reality before the tribunal of Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my helper : I will not fear what man can do unto me.* (Ps. cxvii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this complete manifest-

ation of ourselves will be so made, that every most intimate recess of our interior shall be laid open and made clear, like a crystal in the sun from which cannot be hidden the slightest flaw. Untruth will then be seen placed against truth, iniquity against the divine goodness, ingratitude against the divine beneficence.

APPLICATION. What confusion will then be yours, seeing yourself before the eyes of all, very different from that which men now think you to be? You now form an estimate of your own sins from the common estimate formed by men, who, the more widespread the evil is, regard it the less. But in that day you will judge of sin as it is in very truth. Before the tribunal of Christ, and in the confusion of others, you will more clearly come to perceive and know the evil of your own sins.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All the day long my shame is before me: and the confusion of my face hath covered me.* (Ps. xliii, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that at the universal judgment man will receive not only in his soul, but also in his body, the punishment or the reward that he has deserved: *That he may receive the proper things of the body whether it be good or evil.* (2 Cor. v, 10.) It will be either good without any admixture of evil, or evil without any good.

APPLICATION. Think of this now whilst it means so much for you. At the tribunal of Christ nothing is weighed except our actions, not nobility, nor learning, nor riches. He who has done well will receive good, he who has done evil will receive evil for all eternity. *Give them according to their works.* (Ps. xxvii, 4.) Why then do you not attend in earnest to that which alone matters?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art just, O Lord : and thy judgment is right.* (Ps. cxviii, 137.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REST IN CHRIST

Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. (Matt. xi, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY who those are who labour and who reap no reward, but merely feel the weight of their labours. They are all those who seek consolations in the pleasures and goods of this world. They labour to gain riches and to gratify their own inclinations, and yet they are never satisfied. What is worse, after so great labours they never attain to what they desire and long for : *they labour and are burdened.*

APPLICATION. Not few is the number of such unhappy souls. They labour to gain a name and glory, or to acquire greater ease, or to gratify their own inclinations; and they find themselves burdened by unrest, by contradictions, by remorse of conscience and ever entangled in a multitude of sins. Unhappy you if ever you become such a one as these.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold the man that strengthened himself in his vanity.* (Ps. li, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus Christ invites you to come to Him in order to escape from these distresses, and to be relieved and refreshed. *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* Oh words that should make your heart expand with joy and tenderness ! If Jesus invites you and promises to console you what do you fear ?

Perhaps you fear that He does not really mean what He says, when He thus so lovingly calls you. Or you fear that He, Who is the fount and source of all consolation and of comfort, is unable to keep His promise.

APPLICATION. Leave off once and for all seeking after the consolations of the world, and have recourse quickly to Jesus Christ, and by thus acting you will be speedily delivered from the burden. *The burden shall be taken from off thy shoulder.* (Isa. x, 27.) Observe who those are who live most peacefully and most contentedly. Are they those who seek anxiously after worldly consolations, or not rather those who wish not or seek not any consolations except those to be found at the feet of Jesus, their crucified Saviour.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.* (Ps. cxxxi, 14.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the refreshment and rest which Jesus Christ will give you is of two kinds, the one negative and the other positive. The negative consists in delivering you from the burden of labours and afflictions, and from the search of consolations which are not to be found in the good things of this world but in God alone. The positive consists in causing you to feel effects quite contrary to those which led you to pursue the consolations of this world. For in seeking earthly consolations you became restless and embittered, and your conscience was burdened and you were in danger of being eternally lost.

APPLICATION. Seek consolations then only at the feet of Jesus. He will give you the quiet of a good conscience; He will re-invigorate you with the strength of grace; and He will crown you with joy in the hope

held out to you of the reward of perfect rest in paradise. Is not all this enough to make you accept His invitation and promptly go to Jesus Christ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The most high hath sanctified his own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof, it shall not be moved.* (Ps. xlv, 5, 6.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

VAIN MIRTH

Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep. (Luke vi, 25.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that they, who give themselves up entirely to pleasure and seek thus to secure happiness for themselves, are justly reproved by our Blessed Lord. For they laugh in a valley of tears, which this world really is, where there is nothing but misfortune, sin, and misery, for which they should in all reason weep. This is not the time to laugh and rejoice; the future life is meant for that, and not the present one. *A time to weep, and a time to laugh.* (Eccles. iii, 4.) Moreover so many laugh and rejoice precisely over those things for which they should most bitterly weep: *Who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things.* (Prov. ii, 14.)

APPLICATION. At least learn to pity such unhappy beings, and thank God for having freed you in great measure from this worldly folly. At the same time, however, reflect seriously and be watchful lest a too great liberty and the too great satisfaction that perchance you seek, may not also in the end bring forth for you weeping and mourning.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* (Ps. cxxv, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the punishment with which Christ threatens such unhappy souls. *Woe to you, for you shall mourn and weep.* (Luke vi, 25.) Grief indeed belongs to the soul, weeping to the body; but they will carry both one and the other down to hell with them. Think of the intense grief that the soul will experience amid the sufferings of the damned. So many in this life are inconsolable at the loss of a child, of some possession, of a position in life. What then will be the grief of those who realise that they have lost for ever an infinite good, which is God, and that they lost Him for a vile little pleasure which vanished in a moment? How their vivid realisation of the intense happiness enjoyed in heaven, greater far than all the evil of hell, will increase their agony, their torments, and their despair.

APPLICATION. Think often of this, that so you may rejoice to have no part in their vain and empty laughter. Thus you will not come to be a partaker also of their folly and of their misery.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The sorrows of death surrounded me: and the torrents of iniquity troubled me. The sorrows of hell encompassed me.* (Ps. xvii, 5, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how the tears of the body reveal the sufferings of the mind. What tears does not an intense internal pain draw from the eyes of a sick man who is convulsed by it? And yet who in this life can suffer in his body the torments all the damned suffer in hell, in a fire that will make them feel at the same time all the horrors of all evils, however contrary to each other, such as freezing cold and flames of fire. *In one fire they will feel all kinds of torments,* says St. Jerome. Thus will they have to

pay for their short time of laughing by never-ending tears.

APPLICATION. How much better it is for you to forego in this present life these sinful diversions, and to weep for your own sins and for those of your neighbour. Thus you will not have to weep hopelessly in the future life, where according to the measure of your sinful pleasures here there will be grief and torment there ! *As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her.* (Apoc. xviii, 7.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The unjust shall be punished : and the seed of the wicked shall perish. But the just shall inherit the land, and shall dwell therein for evermore.* (Ps. xxxvi, 28, 29.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HEARING THE DIVINE SPIRIT

The Spirit breatheth where he will ; and thou hearest his voice ; but thou knowest not whence he cometh and whither he goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (John iii, 8.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that he, who is born according to the flesh, resembles those who gave him birth although not quite perfectly. He also who is born supernaturally of the Spirit is like unto the Spirit of the Lord, Who gave him this new birth although far from equal to Him, and remaining far inferior even in heaven when in his most perfect state. The actions therefore of a really spiritual man have somewhat of the divine in them, having some of the qualities which Christ here says that the divine inspirations have. The first property is that *the*

Spirit of the Lord *breatheth where He will* with an absolute freedom of action, subject to no laws and to no rules.

APPLICATION. Similar to this are the actions of all truly spiritual persons ; *so is every one that is born of the spirit.* It is enough for them to know the divine will. They then at once do it, conquering interiorly all the opposition of their judgment and all human respect. Are you in like manner straightforward in spiritual matters and in the divine service, or have you a thousand reserves that hold you back ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath coveted to long for thy justifications at all times.* (Ps. cxviii, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another property of the Spirit of the Lord, which is that He speaks in such a manner that it is impossible not to hear Him. *And thou hearest His voice.* You may resist and may not accept His divine inspirations, but you cannot help hearing them, even though you close your ears. So it is with every really spiritual man. By the perfection of his actions, by calmness, by modesty, by humility, and by obedience, with a mute language he invites others also to good. They may decline to imitate him, yet they cannot avoid hearing him.

APPLICATION. Have you in your life and in your actions such a voice, which speaks to all and which invites all to good ? Happy indeed if you have. But beware that you act not in a way that rather incites to evil.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me ; for he will speak peace unto his people.* (Ps. lxxxiv, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you cannot tell whence comes the voice of God which speaks to you, nor whither it goes : *thou knowest not whence he cometh, and whither he goeth.* You cannot tell whence it comes. It sometimes comes from beholding a corpse, from hearing a sermon, from reading a holy book, or conversing with a spiritual person. Neither can you tell whither He goeth. Which of us can foretell what God intends to do with us when He calls us to serve Him more fervently ? Is it to be an apostle, a martyr, or a model of patience ? *Who can think what the will of God is?* (Wis. ix, 13.)

APPLICATION. A truly spiritual man is content to have only God as witness to the end for which he works. He cares nothing for what people may say, and although he does not conceal his virtuous actions, he hides his intentions and his ways, which he holds secret from every one, except from him whom on earth he has in the place of God. Neither will your spirit be the true one, if you make known your intentions and ways without reason to every one.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my helper : I will not fear what man can do unto me.* (Ps. cxvii, 6.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JESUS OUR HELPER IN THE COMBAT

Have confidence, I have overcome the world. (John xvi, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the combat which we have to sustain is against those three well-known enemies, an immoderate love of possessions, of pleasures, and of praise or reputation. You should prepare

yourself for this combat by a courageous determination to suffer, and to accept with patience, the privations, the sorrows, the slights which are to be met with every day.

APPLICATION. In order to do this you must not only lay aside, as the Apostle says (Heb. xii, 1), the weight of the sins which you have committed, but also all the occasions of committing sin again. For how could you ever hope to abstain from the vain pleasures of the world, to shun its glory and grandeur, while you remain amidst so many occasions that attract you ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do manfully, let thy heart take courage, and wait thou on the Lord.* (Ps. xxvi, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that after having laid aside all impediments, you need to strengthen yourself by the example of Christ. Having suffered so much for love of you, He will help you to acquire the desire and the patience to suffer for love of Him. In order to encourage yourself, look upon Jesus Who, to set before you an example, refused the glory due to His Sacred Body and chose rather poverty, and suffering, and contempt. *Who having joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.* (Heb. xii, 2.)

APPLICATION. Think often then how the life of Jesus was a continual and a heavy cross, to which He was nailed by those constant attendants upon Him, poverty, suffering and contempt. These were ever at His side, His companions at His birth, during His life, and at His death. Fix your gaze attentively on Him. It will give you strength against your weakness, as did the sight of the bronze serpent to the Jews in the wilderness.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He is my God and*

my Saviour. He is my protector: I shall be moved no more. (Ps. lxi, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus is also called by the Apostle *the author and finisher of faith.* (Ibid.) As author or beginner He encourages you by that which He now promises you; as finisher by that which He will afterwards give you. Jesus is author of the faith on earth, teaching it by His doctrines, manifesting it by holy examples, and confirming it by such abundant lights to the mind and impulses to the heart. He will hereafter be the finisher in heaven, rewarding the faith you have here professed in Him with that clear vision, into which faith will at last be resolved.

APPLICATION. This transcendent vision will be in proportion to the degree, in which you have now conformed yourself to His example, in embracing poverty and despising riches; in embracing suffering and refusing pleasures; and in embracing contempt and flying from honours.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages: and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.* (Ps. cxliv, 13.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOD OUR TEACHER

You call me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. (John xiii, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that God Himself wishes to be your chiefest Master, to instruct and to teach you by means of prayer. When He speaks to you through the mouths of others, He gives you lessons as a public teacher, but when He speaks to you in prayer, He is your own special and private Teacher. He

intends to teach you in this school not high or subtle things, but those that are useful. *I teach thee profitable things* (Isaias xlviii, 17), He says by means of His prophet, things ordained for the extirpation of sins, for the acquisition of virtue and of a closer union with God.

APPLICATION. Whether your prayer is profitable or not, is shown not by the lights, nor the tears therein, but by its leading to your living a more mortified, strong, and fervent life. When you reap not any profit in your manner of life from prayer, you may rightly suspect it, for it is a school intended to lead to practice.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let my prayer come in before thee : incline thy ear to my petition.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this Master does not only teach you by word, but also by His example : *I myself that spoke behold I am here.* (Isa. lii, 6.) You have not to weary yourself in searching far and wide for a workable rule for your actions. It is enough for you that you look at Jesus Christ, and see how He acted in whatever matter you have in hand. All other rules are apt to lead astray. The quickest and the surest one is to look at the actions of your divine Master : *And thine eyes shall see thy teacher.* (Isa. xxx, 20.)

APPLICATION. Nothing can ever happen for which you have not an example at once ready for you in Him. Reflect on the life of Christ, and thus regulate your actions in any proof which God may put you to, either by means of prosperity, or by adversity, or by means of the devil. How have you tried thus far to profit by His divine example ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, O God*

our protector, and look upon the face of thy Christ. (Ps. lxxxiii. 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this Divine Master does not only give you lessons profitable to you in the school of prayer, but also enables you to understand them and gives you the strength to put them in practice. Behold then with what zest you should go to so profitable a school, the school of prayer. How many simple folk by the purity of their lives have come to understand in prayer things unknown to the wise! How many souls in the time of prayer have been strengthened to embrace the virtues of patience, of humility, of charity, which before had seemed to them impossible to hope to attain!

APPLICATION. How far do you appreciate and value such a Master, Who in the act of giving you His instruction gives you also the capacity and the strength to avail yourself of it? *By his knowledge shall this my just servant justify many.* (Isa. liii, 11.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains: from whence help shall come to me. My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.* (Ps. cxx, 1–2.)

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

(Read Luke xviii, 9–14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY in this pharisee of the gospel the true picture of a proud and a haughty spirit. Proud in his outward bearing, in his arrogance he did not deign to humble himself or to bow down even in the presence of God: *Standing he prayed.* Still more proud interiorly, he praised and flattered himself for the little good he had done, without ever reflecting at

all upon his faults and his pride. As for others, on the contrary, he considers only their faults ; he thinks the worst of each, preferring himself to all : *I am not as the rest of men.* In his prayer he does not beseech God for anything, as if he would say : *I am sufficient for myself.* (Ecclus. xi, 26.)

APPLICATION. Turn your eyes now on yourself and see if your outward bearing before God and men is that of a proud man, or of one who is humble. See whether you are vain and praise yourself for the good you do, and pay no attention to your own sins ; whether you easily condemn the faults of others and reckon yourself their superior. Then ask yourself, if this spirit of pride displeased God so greatly in a pharisee, what must it do in one who calls himself a follower of Christ ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord looketh on the lowly and the lofty he knoweth afar off.* (Ps. cxxxvii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY in the poor publican the bearing of a truly humble man. He stands there in the temple humbling himself before God and men : *standing afar off.* Even as one excommunicated and unworthy to associate with others : *he would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven.* Filled with confusion, bowed down to the earth, he did not dare to lift up his eyes to heaven. *He struck his breast* in his deep sorrow for his sins ; he confessed himself the worst of sinners ; and he begged mercy of God. *O God be merciful to me a sinner.*

APPLICATION. Such is the manner you should imitate in making your supplications to God and in pleading for mercy. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.* (Ecclus. xxxv, 21.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath had regard unto the prayer of the lowly, and hath not despised their petition.* (Ps. ci, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how in this proud pharisee and in the humble publican are verified the words: *Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* For pride is the vice that is most hated of heaven and that most of all keeps us estranged from God; whereas humility is the virtue which is most pleasing to heaven and unites us most closely to God. He would rather tolerate men that are full of sin than those who are swelled with pride; and He hates less sin that is joined with humility than innocence joined with pride. *God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.* (James iv, 6.) Hence as by humility sin is cast out and the soul purified, so by pride virtue itself is poisoned and vice generated.

APPLICATION. Learn then to have a great horror of the vice of pride, and a great love for the virtue of humility. This is the virtue of which Jesus by His example made Himself most especially our Master. He wished to eradicate that first sin of pride brought by Lucifer from the first into the earthly paradise, and transmitted to all of us by our first parents. Consider attentively the examples of humility which your Redeemer has given you, that so you may the more desire to be the disciple of Jesus Who was a teacher of humility, rather than that of Lucifer who was a master of pride.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou wilt save the humble people, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud.* (Ps. xvii, 28.)

MONDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SELF-CONFIDENCE

To some who trusted in themselves as just . . . he spoke this parable. (Luke xviii, 9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the lesson which Jesus Christ taught in the parable of the pharisee and the publican is summed up by St. Paul in the words : *He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.* (1 Cor. x, 12.) And here let it be observed that the Apostle directs his solemn warning not to him *who stands*, but to him who *thinketh himself to stand*. For who is there who may in his spiritual life stand in such a way as not to be in danger of falling ? Perhaps you may imagine that in your present state you are already secure. But oh how you are deceived ! Think of Lucifer, who fell from heaven, of Solomon, of David. Do not think therefore that those who fall are only those who are beginners in the way of the Lord ; there are many also among the more advanced.

APPLICATION. You should in consequence not only have this holy fear in youth, but keep it all your life even unto your old age, as Ecclesiasticus says, *Keep his fear and grow old therein.* (Ecclus. ii, 6.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, that walk in his ways.* (Ps. cxxvii, 1.)

¶ CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Apostle likewise says, *let him take heed*, that is, that we must watch and be on our guard, to observe wherein may lie the greatest danger of our falling. Is it in the over-great confidence of not falling or in presuming to trust in your own strength ? Is it in wilful negligence in the exercise of prayer, or of recourse to God ? Is it in the too deli-

cate treatment of your body or the neglect of the custody of your senses? Is it in occasions of danger which you should flee or from the example of evil companions from whom you should keep aloof? Is it by negligence in resisting the assaults of diabolical temptations, and the irregular inclinations of your senses?

APPLICATION. In all these dangers amidst which you continually live, you must take heed lest you fall, and lest you think yourself secure and safe from them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The just shall see and fear.* (Ps. li, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in order to ensure yourself against falling, it is not enough to see these dangers; you must remove yourself from them as far as is possible. Yet you can never render yourself safe from these obstacles, if you do not provide yourself with a guide and a support. Your guide must be a good confessor or spiritual father who will direct you in the safe way, and your support will be in the help of God which you must assiduously ask for.

APPLICATION. Thus will you safely traverse the road, where without guidance and without protection you could not make a single step in the way of salvation, which might not be full of the greatest danger to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I was sore pressed, and overthrown that I might fall; but the Lord held me up.* (Ps. cxvii, 13.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE YOKE OF CHRIST

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart. (Matt. xi, 29.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the evangelical counsels are in fact the yoke of Christ. They are called a yoke because they oblige us to live, not indeed as we would choose, but under the rule of Him who governs us in the place of God. They are also called the yoke of Christ; *my yoke.* For as God He taught them, and as Man He practised them thirty-three years, living in strictest poverty, strictest mortification, and perfect subjection. This is not a yoke for irrational but for rational beings, and therefore it must be borne voluntarily of one's own free will. Consequently He says: *Take my yoke upon you,* so that you may understand that you should submit without waywardness not only your bodily faculties, but also that higher nature which is proper to man. *Your reasonable service.* (Rom. xii, 1.)

APPLICATION. Reflect well and see if you bear the yoke of Christ unwillingly and with repugnance, as an unreasoning creature might do, or if you, in the far more noble nature of man, submit not only the flesh, but your spirit also to this yoke with a good will: *Submit your neck to the yoke, and let your soul receive discipline.* (Ecclus. li, 34.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Shall not my soul be subject to God? for from him is my salvation.* (Ps. lxi, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that there are two sins which make us bear Christ's yoke unwillingly, viz., impatience

and pride ; impatience because it makes it seem too heavy, and pride which makes it appear too humiliating. Consequently Christ bids us to learn patience and humility from Him. For if we become patient and humble after His example, the yoke will seem light and we shall enjoy rest.

APPLICATION. Go then to the feet of Jesus and there learn true meekness and humility. By so doing you will feel no burden.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be thou, O my soul, subject to God, for from him is my patience.* (Ps. lxi, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how all things, that can annoy and disquiet the soul, come either from within itself or from without. From without come contempt, ill-treatment and disasters ; from within come moral and physical defects. Against these intrinsic and extrinsic evils, the best and the most necessary weapons are meekness against the contempt and other ills that come to you from outside, humility against the moral and physical evils which come from within.

APPLICATION. With these two virtues and with these alone will you be tranquil and safe, even as a rock in the storm.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord will exalt the meek unto salvation.* (Ps. cxlix, 4.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

I shall go and prepare a place for you . . . that where I am you also may be. (John xiv, 3.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that as the Apostle tells us (Heb. xiii, 14) this wretched earth is not our abiding city. Our city is heaven. How much then

are you not bound to thank God, for having called you to so blessed a destiny! You must in spirit forget your earthly country, so that you may not recognise any country as your own except heaven : *The city of perfect beauty!* St. Francis of Assisi rejoiced greatly as he renounced all right to his heritage in the presence of his bishop, because thus despoiled he could now recognise no one as his father except only his heavenly Father.

APPLICATION. Do you likewise rejoice, that the true followers of Christ have no other country than heaven to recognise as their own.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I was glad at the things that were said unto me. We will go into the house of the Lord.* (Ps. cxxi, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you have therefore to live in this world as a stranger does in a city, where he has no abiding home. He pays little attention to its affairs nor does he in any way attach himself to it. He regards it as a place that nowise concerns him. So have you to act as long as you live on this earth. This is not your city ; you are here as a stranger.

APPLICATION. Yet do you not strive much to fix your abode here below? You interest yourself as much in the affairs of your relatives, of your house and of your country as if you were never to leave them. Oh how much out of all due order is this! How prejudicial and detrimental to your true profit!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Woe to me that my sojourn is prolonged.* (Ps. cxix, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you are not only a stranger on this earth, but a pilgrim : *We seek one* (a city) *that is to come.* A pilgrim, who passes many places on his way, does not trouble to take with him more than is necessary for his daily support. He goes forward with

haste, unencumbered, and seeks the most direct way to the desired destination.

APPLICATION. This too is how it behoves you to conduct yourself in the pilgrimage of this life, to remain here in body indeed, but in your soul to soar up to heaven, just as the pilgrim himself is in the city through which he passes, whilst his spirit is in the place he longs for. But how differently do you proceed! You think as little of heaven as if it were not your true country at all.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unto thee I have lifted up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.* (Ps. cxxii, 1.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SEED TIME OF LIFE

The son of man . . . will render to every man according to his works. (Matt. xvi, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the present life is the time for sowing and the future that for reaping. The seed is the work done ; the harvest the reward or the punishment. He who has sown good seed, that is who has done well, will receive blessings ; he who has sown tares, that is done evil, will receive punishment. This is a law that admits of no exception ; it applies to all. Be you prince or be you peasant, there is no difference.

APPLICATION. Why then do you take so little care as to what you do ? Your actions are seeds that cannot be without fruit for eternity. Make sure therefore whether they be good or bad. If they are bad, unhappy indeed are you, and how much evil awaits you ! If they are good, scatter them plen-

teously and with joy, that you may reap a blessed eternity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, wilt render to every man according to his works.* (Ps. lxi, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in order to have a good harvest it is not enough to sow good seed; it must be sown in good soil: *They have sown wheat and reaped thorns.* (Jer. xii, 13.) Within yourself there is a twofold soil, the good one which is the spirit and the bad which is the flesh. Therefore the Apostle says: *He that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting.* (Gal. vi, 8.) Therefore it suffices not that your actions be good. You must direct them to the good of your spirit and not to that of the flesh.

APPLICATION. When with pure intention you discharge the duty imposed upon you by obedience, as when you study or when you preach, you sow good seed; but if you do all this from motives of pride or ambition you sow in the flesh, and as such you will *reap corruption.* If then you would reap a profitable harvest, sow for the good of the spirit, and not in order to pander to the disordered desires of the flesh.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I set the Lord always in my sight, for he is at my right hand.* (Ps. xv, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if the man who does well were immediately to receive good things in this world, and he who does evil should receive evil, men would assuredly walk more cautiously. But such is not the case. The life work of man resembles the sowing of seed, and so for the reward or punishment he must await the future harvest in eternity.

APPLICATION. If then you have done ill, do not

say: *I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?* (Ecclus. v, 4.) For it is but too true that in due time you must reap its punishment. But if you have done well, be also sure that you will reap your eternal reward. Do you not see with what patience the husbandman awaits the harvest? Do you likewise have patience: *For the coming of the Lord is at hand.* (James v, 8.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord knoweth the way of the just; and the way of the wicked shall perish.* (Ps. i, 6.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

STRENGTH IN CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John xv, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ suffered so grievously in the flesh, not indeed because He had need to subdue it, for it was always most pure and most obedient, but because it was necessary to conquer and subdue your flesh, which is ever recalcitrant and rebellious. Hence it is with reason that St. Peter exhorts you to bring your flesh into subjection by similar sufferings: *Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought.* (1 Peter iv, 1.)

APPLICATION. Observe how the Apostle, knowing your weakness, desires at least that if you do not participate in the actual passion of Christ, you should arm yourself with the thought of it. Therefore what excuse can you have if you do not do it?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *There is no health for my flesh, because of thy wrath; there is no rest for my bones because of my sins.* (Ps. xxvii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this arming is to be two-fold ; defensive in order to resist the assaults of your rebellious flesh, and offensive so as to make war on it and bring it into obedience. The thought of what Christ suffered for you is your best armour in both ways. Defensive, such as that of which the prophet speaks : *Thou shalt give them a buckler of heart thy labour.* (Lam. iii, 65.) For how is it possible that, contemplating Christ bathed in His blood upon the cross for your sins, you should at the same time think of giving yourself up to unlawful pleasures ? It will likewise be to you as offensive armour, for you will feel yourself burning with a holy desire to ill-treat and mortify your body, in order to inflict the just punishment that is due to your flesh.

APPLICATION. But for this, however, it is not enough to recall the passion of Christ merely in a superficial manner. You must ponder it with assiduous attention. For if the flesh is at all times ready to make war on you, you must never think of laying down these holy weapons against it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, O Lord, our protector, and look upon the face of thy Christ.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, besides reflecting upon the passion, to gain much profit from it you must above all strive to understand Who it is that suffers so much for you. If the Son of God had done nothing more for you than merely taste just one drop of bitter gall, that should be sufficient motive for you to live for the love of Him in an ocean of bitterness. But what if you consider the excessive sufferings, which the Son of God endured in His body for you, and for which He had need to provide Himself with miraculous

strength ? Tobias fell to the ground as if dead, when he learned that his loving guide was the Archangel Raphael.

APPLICATION. Thus should it be with you, at the thought that He Who descended from heaven to earth to suffer for you, is none other than the Son of God Himself. This thought should make you live as if dead to yourself, as if your body were no longer able to burden you. *I will be mindful and remember and my soul shall languish within me.* (Lam. iii, 20.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against his Christ.* (Ps. ii, 2.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

STRENGTH IN TEMPTATION

Without me you can do nothing. (John xv, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how in temptation St. Paul most earnestly begged God many times to free him from the sting of his flesh : *For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me*, notwithstanding that he did not yield to the temptation but chastised and kept his flesh in subjection. Yet when he understood from God that it was better for him to remain, like other men, subject to this weakness, God saying to him : *My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in weakness*, then he gloried in this his infirmity : *Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities.* For he knew that by means of them the power of Christ would be established in him.

APPLICATION. Learn from this that your glory is not to consist in being free even from the worst temptations, but in drawing from them that benefit

which God wishes you to gain for the good of your soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *By thee shall I be delivered from temptation.* (Ps. xvii, 30.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what virtues of Christ the Apostle saw rooted in himself by his glorying in this weakness. They were humility regarding himself, and meekness regarding others. And these precisely were the virtues most taught and practised by Christ : *Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart.* (Matt. xi, 29.) This stimulus served at one and the same time to keep the Apostle ever humble amid the many reasons he had for vainglory, and meek towards others, sympathising with their defects and with their infirmities.

APPLICATION. If you knew how to learn from your weaknesses to be humble and meek, you also might begin to glory in them. Your infirmities are like so many windows, which let the sunlight enter into the room of your soul, to show you the low opinion you should have of yourself, and the charity you should display towards your neighbour. And do you despise so great a benefit ? *A grievous sickness maketh the soul sober.* (Ecclus. xxxi, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Prove me, O God, and know my heart ; examine me and lead me in the eternal way.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 23, 24.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you indeed have no reason to glory as the Apostle did. Hence, all the more reason not to cease to seek what will remind you of your own vileness, whilst you cease not to be foolishly proud. You think you have reached the third heaven because of a few tears shed in prayer, and still you show your hardness when reproving and correcting others. Those

weaknesses in you, which are common even to great souls, were permitted in them in order that they should remain steadfast and grow in virtue ; in you they are rather a chastisement, because you are so poor and yet so proud.

APPLICATION. Hence you can gather what a great blessing it is to be meek and humble. To possess these precious virtues, it was good even for the saints to be subjected to the worst and to the most troublesome temptations.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.* (Ps. lxxii, 22.)

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CURE OF THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN

(Read Mark vii, 31–37.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that, in the cure of this deaf and dumb man, Christ would teach you three remedies for your sins, and so enable you to lead a fervent devout life. The first is that *He took him from the multitude apart.* He withdrew him from the crowd of people. This then is the first remedy you must make use of in order to rid yourself of your sins. Begin by withdrawing yourself from the crowd of thoughts about, and affections for, the things of this world ; so many conversations, so many vain diversions which serve only to distract your mind. Begin to enter into yourself, and think seriously of the state of your soul. For it is in solitude that you will receive from God more light and help to correct your sins, and to attend to the acquisition of virtue.

APPLICATION. Apply to yourself the words of the prophet Osee : *I will lead her into the wilderness and*

I will speak to her heart. (Osee ii, 14.) Remove then from you all encumbrances and useless occupations, which are incompatible with a really devout life, if you would advance in the way of perfection. *He shall sit solitary and hold his peace; because he hath taken it up upon himself.* (Lam. iii, 28.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine eyes have looked unto thee before the morning, that I might think upon thy words.* (Ps. cxviii, 148.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another remedy in those words *looking up to heaven.* Jesus raised his eyes to heaven, to teach you that you should not only withdraw yourself from the cares and the affections for the things of the world, but that you should give yourself to the serious consideration of the things of heaven and of eternity. Thus did holy David, who said: *I had in my mind the eternal years* (Ps. lxxvi, 6), for by thus keeping his mind turned towards the eternal years, he despised and cared nothing for those passing and transitory things, which in the course of a few days disappear and vanish in smoke.

APPLICATION. If you will also fix your thoughts on future things, you will easily come to despise the present, and to correct your disorderly affections, and to bestow your serious attention on the acquirement of virtues.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I said, Now have I begun: this is the change of the right hand of the most High.* (Ps. lxxvi, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you can never raise your mind to eternal things, nor disengage it from affections to present things, without the special and efficacious aid of divine grace. Consequently the third remedy is, that you have recourse to God for this help, and

that you earnestly plead for it in prayer. This Christ teaches you here by His example: *Looking up to heaven he groaned.* Your prayers must not be cold, but they must be fervent and accompanied by tears and sighs.

APPLICATION. Examine then, whether there be found in your prayers tears of real repentance for your past faults, together with fervent desires of being helped in the acquirement of virtue. A child that asks to be lifted up in its mother's arms may not always succeed; but it will surely do so if it asks with a pitiful cry.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *When I called upon him, the God of my justice heard me. . . . Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.* (Ps. iv, 2–3.)

MONDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GOODNESS AND THE SEVERITY OF GOD

None is good but one, that is God. (Mark x, 18.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the goodness and the severity of God, of which the Apostle speaks (Rom. xi, 22), of the goodness with which He bestows His benefits upon us without any merit of ours, the severity with which He visits our offences against Him. And yet, in fact, God is never really severe, for He never punishes as much as He might, for His justice is always tempered with mercy. It is said that God is severe when He shows justice rather than mercy. The consideration then of His goodness and of His justice is to be for you a ladder by which you shall escape from the enemy. When you are tempted to distrust, contemplate the goodness of God towards those even who

are undeserving of it. When you are tempted to presumption, abase yourself by thinking of the divine justice and severity even towards those who are most dear to Him.

APPLICATION. Reflect whether it is by such considerations you avoid the extremes of discouragement and of excessive security.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.* (Ps. xviii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the justice and severity of God in the persons of so many whom He allowed to fall from the loftiest heights, such as Judas, and Saul, and Solomon. How many there are who shamefully fall from sublime heights of sanctity and are lost in hell, many perhaps for their first sin! Oh, what a terrible thought! On the other hand consider the goodness of God towards yourself, in bearing with you after so many sins and heaping blessings on you. Assuredly you cannot attribute this to anything in yourself. It comes entirely from His own goodness.

APPLICATION. Beware however lest you think yourself secure, since you cannot tell if God will still extend His goodness towards you, by reason of your poor correspondence with it. To save your soul God must continue to favour you with His efficacious aid, which He is not bound to give you. See then that you correspond with His divine grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Forsake me not, O Lord my God, give, thou God of my salvation.* (Ps. xxxvii, 22, 23.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if God takes from you the favours and graces of His goodness, you will then be eternally lost. *Thou shalt be cut off.* You will be cut off as a useless branch from the tree of life without pity and cast into the unquenchable fire.

APPLICATION. Like unto one therefore standing between hope and fear, ever recommend yourself most fervently and constantly to God and to His mercy. Remember that if He is good and benignant, He is also just and severe.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for my soul trusteth in thee. And in the shadow of thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away.* (Ps. lvi, 2.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SIN OF PRIDE

He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. (Luke i, 51.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that pride, which is an inordinate desire of self-exaltation or of superiority, brought about the fall of the angels and of Adam, aspiring as they did to make themselves equal to God. How much then to be dreaded is this vice, which was to be found not only in the earthly but also in the heavenly paradise. Lucifer aspired to make himself like unto God by lording it even over the stars: *I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.* (Isa. xiv, 13.) Adam aspired to become even as God Himself in knowledge: *You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* (Gen. iii, 5.)

APPLICATION. See then how imperative it is that, as regards knowledge or position, you should know how to keep within the limits God has appointed for you. If you wish to exceed these, you must be numbered among the proud.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He that worketh pride shall not dwell in the midst of my house.* (Ps. c, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the disastrous ruin caused by the pride of Lucifer and of Adam. Lucifer fell in one moment, with all his followers, from the empyreal heaven above into the depths of hell. And these were some of the noblest spirits and fairest creatures that had come forth from the hand of God! Oh what a great evil must pride then be, a single deliberate thought of which resulted in such irreparable loss. Not less disastrous was that which Adam suffered in the earthly paradise. He was deprived of the dominion he had hitherto possessed and of original justice; he was condemned to an infinity of afflictions.

APPLICATION. Reflect how Adam was punished not only in himself but in all his posterity likewise, and that this great punishment and irreparable evil never decreases or ceases. And will you allow a vice so hated and punished by God to predominate in you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast rebuked the proud; cursed are they that err from thy commandments.* (Ps. CXVIII, 21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if you would keep this vice of pride in word and mind far from you, often consider what you are, and Who God is. Thus you will learn how just it is that you should be subject in all things and conformed to His divine will. In order to banish it from your words, consider how disedifying and even ridiculous it seems to you in others. Fly then from pride both interiorly and exteriorly. But it is an insidious vice which easily insinuates itself even unto good works, and if you are not careful it will sometimes surprise and get the better of you.

APPLICATION. When then you perceive pride or

vanity in yourself banish it from you at once, either by an act of humility, or, when it is very importunate, by despising it and turning your mind to other thoughts. You will be free from much sin, if you know how to fly from this vice. You will be indeed unhappy if you voluntarily allow it to rule in you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou wilt save the humble, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud.* (Ps. xvii, 28.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LOVE OF ONE ANOTHER

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matt. xix, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how great is the debt which you owe to your Creator and Redeemer, Who went so far as to die on a hard gibbet for you. It is the same debt which you owe to your neighbour, to whom God has ceded all the claims He has upon you. For seeing that of Himself He has need of nothing, He wills that you should do for your neighbour all that you owe to Him your master.

APPLICATION. Have you then the heart to refuse Him this just acknowledgment, which He asks of you, in exchange for the countless benefits He has bestowed on you, namely to help the necessities, and solace the afflictions of your neighbour?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered unto me?* (Ps. cxv, 12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you are bound by the law of charity to love your neighbour as yourself, and to feel all his sorrows and losses as your own. But the

sorrows and losses, that you should feel most intensely for, are the spiritual evils of the soul, because they are the greatest of all and are the least guarded against, because the soul allows itself to be led like a slave to hell without making the least resistance. To be freed from corporal evils every one will look to himself, but how few seek help to be liberated from the evil of sin, and how often even is it rejected and despised!

APPLICATION. If you saw a dear friend of yours taken off as a slave would you not be moved to pity? Would you not do your utmost to procure his freedom from that bitter fortune? Why then are you not much more moved to pity over those souls who are real slaves of Lucifer! Why do you not strive to rescue them from his hard service, and to restore them to Christ? At the price of all His blood He has ransomed and has healed them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is he that considereth the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.* (Ps. xl, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you must not draw back from this holy enterprise because of your weakness, and because you do not possess the gifts it seems to require. Do you not hear the words in which you are told: *Recover thy neighbour according to thy power?* (Ecclus. xxix, 26.) You cannot perhaps speak from a pulpit, nor cross the ocean in order to win souls to God. But souls may also be saved by private counsel, by prayer, by penance and by good example. Oh how much good you can do for souls in this way! *For the kingdom of God is not in speech but in power.* (1 Cor. iv, 20.)

APPLICATION. Observe however the warning which the same inspired writer here (Ecclus. ib.) gives you.

Take heed to thyself that thou fall not. In drawing others from evil expose not yourself to the danger of falling therein. In order to help others do not neglect your own good, by forgetting prayer and mortification. Strive to do all according to wise counsel, and with all necessary precautions. Some there are, who after having sent many souls to paradise have unhappily been buried in hell!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Draw me not away, O Lord, together with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity destroy me not.* (Ps. xxvii, 3.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CHRIST THE JUST JUDGE

His fan is in his hand . . . he will gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (Luke iii, 17.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the fan, which Christ holds in His hand, signifies the judicial power which belongs to Him as God and as Man; as God because of His supreme and divine power; as Man because He merited this power in divers ways, principally by allowing Himself to be treated as a criminal before earthly tribunals. Truly just is it that our Lord should be seated on His throne in majesty to judge all men, Who for the salvation of all men submitted to be condemned by judges most iniquitous and most unjust. Rejoice then with Him in this glory that He will receive in that last day.

APPLICATION. Endeavour to beg His mercy now whilst He is still your advocate, for in that day as your judge He can only show you rigorous justice. Reflect seriously too what will be your lot on that day. Will

you be as the wheat or will you be as the chaff ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord hath reigned . . . justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne.* (Ps. xcvi, 1–2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the good resemble grain by the multiplicity of the fruit they produce, sometimes even a hundred-fold, and by the health of spirit which they maintain in the world. The bad resemble straw, because of their sterility, their levity and inconstancy. At present the good are mingled with the bad, because the bad can serve and be of great use to the good, as the straw to the grain, by giving them occasion of becoming more mortified, and more humble. This mingling of straw and of grain, of the good and bad, is to be found the world over.

APPLICATION. If you are like grain mortified and crushed, envy not the straw that is proud in its lightness, and which will be soon separated apart and cast to the winds. *I will scatter them with a fan.* (Jer. xv, 7.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The wicked are like the dust which the wind driveth from the face of the earth.* (Ps. i, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the end for which this separation takes place : *He will gather the wheat into His barn but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.* (Luke iii, 17.) Heaven is the abode where the elect will be safe and secure, gathered like grain into the granary. They will rejoice in being all united together in love, praising and blessing God, and in not being constrained to abide among the wicked who afflicted them. How much better then is it to procure for yourself at any cost to be as the good grain, than to

be cast aside as the straw and thrown into eternal fire. There the wicked will burn indeed like straw, yet still continue to suffer in *unquenchable fire.*

APPLICATION. Reflect then seriously, whilst still there is time, what it means to burn eternally in the midst of a fire so fierce, so sharp, that our fire in comparison with that of hell is, as the Saints have said, a mere picture of painted fire. Let us then be found as good wheat before our judge.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire, in the time of thy anger : The Lord shall trouble them in his wrath and fire shall devour them.* (Ps. xx, 10.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST

Do this for a commemoration of me. (Luke xxii, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that you should ever be diligent as the Apostle St. Paul counsels us (Heb. xii, 3–4), in thinking about Jesus Christ. He, our crucified Redeemer, is the remedy of all your ills. Let therefore your assiduous thought be to *think diligently* Who it is Who suffered for you. It is the King of glory Who indeed from the beginning of the world suffered in His saints, in Abel, in Joseph, in Jeremiah ; but now He no longer suffers in His own servants only, but in Himself. And from whom does He suffer ? Even from the very persons for whom He hung on the cross, *from sinners.* What does He suffer ? A torment in every way most cruel, most ignominious and unjust.

APPLICATION. Enter into yourself in order to penetrate fully these truths. For you will thus gain

great help in the small sufferings you have to endure.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, O God, our protector: look upon the face of thy Christ.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that nothing will so strengthen you to suffer, as to think often of the passion of Jesus Christ. Nothing so animates and invigorates a soldier as to see his king himself, covered with wounds and bathed in blood, in the front line of the battle.

APPLICATION. Yet perhaps you may think you do not need to strengthen yourself. Reflect a little how you so easily lose heart at every slight thing, and then neglect the service of your Lord.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The son of iniquity shall have no power to hurt him. My hand shall help him, and mine arm shall strengthen him.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 22–23.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the confusion that all your own unworthiness should arouse in you, when you ponder on it at the foot of the cross. Your sin does not harm Christ, yet see how much He did on the Cross to deliver you from it. But to yourself sin does infinite harm. Yet, notwithstanding, what have you done to remove it far from you? Have you gone so far as to give even a drop of blood for it? Ah truly does the Apostle say: *You have not yet resisted unto blood* (ibid.)

APPLICATION. Reflect then that not only will you not shed a drop of your blood to atone for your sin, but neither will you bear any slight on your reputation, any injury to your health, nor will you deprive yourself of the least satisfaction. Is it not so? When St. Paul bids us resist and fight until the very end of the struggle, even *unto blood*, he means that we are

not to tolerate sin, which Jesus shed the very last drop of His blood to destroy.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit : a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* (Ps. l, 19.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TEMPTATION

Begone Satan, for it is written : The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and him only shalt thou serve. (Matt. iv, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when the demon tempts you to evil, he wishes to put his foot on your neck, and to trample upon you as on a vile slave. As, however, he can never force you or do you violence, he can but instigate and incite you. Therefore he strives to bend your will, and make you abase yourself by freely consenting to his wicked suggestions.

APPLICATION. What is to be thought of this shameful homage that, by sinning, you have perhaps so often paid to the devil ? Are you not filled with confusion, in recalling that you have so often placed yourself under the foul feet of one whom you should rather have trampled upon ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How long shall my enemy be exalted over me ?* (Ps. xii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the devil has always the very worst designs upon you, though he seems to ask you only to bend and relax a little. For by so asking you merely for a beginning of evil, which does not seem great, or frighten you, such as a look at or a wish for forbidden fruit, as he did with Eve, it is afterwards easy for him to obtain all he wants, on

account of the extraordinary facility we have of passing from a small evil to a greater one.

APPLICATION. Why then not make a determined resistance to the suggestions of your enemy? At least do not add that prostration of yourself before him, which is involved in the passing on to the commission of grave sin?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord. To thee have I fled.* (Ps. cxlii, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that from the act of prostrating oneself to be trampled upon by Satan, one passes on to the state of being a public highway whereon he is allowed to pass forward or backward at will. Such is the condition to which the sinner arrives at last, passing from actual sin to habitual sin. By actual sin, *thou hast laid thy body on the ground*, as the prophet Isaias says; by habitual sin, *as a way to them that went over.* (Isa. li, 23.) This is what Satan aimed at when he asked of you but one step. He wishes never to lift his foot off you, and to trample on you as his slave for all eternity.

APPLICATION. Do not be so senseless as to let him delude you into taking the first step, and afterwards becoming a highway to all that is evil. How many, alas! even among the good, have been tricked in this way, by giving way to very little in the beginning, and afterwards to the greater evil, and that without any remedy! Guard against yielding even one step before your sworn enemy and betrayer.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Keep me from the snare, which they have laid for me, and from the stumbling-blocks of them that work iniquity.* (Ps. cxl, 9)

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT: THE GOOD SAMARITAN

(Read Luke x, 23–37.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what God desires of you by this precept. He commands that your heart, that is your will, be turned towards Him; that your desires follow no other law than the law of God. In one word, that you desire nothing better than to be united to God; that you rejoice in nothing else than the honour of God; that you grieve for nothing except what offends God; that you fear nothing but to incur the anger of God. Moreover, He desires that all the members of your body be employed in promoting the glory of God, and that your whole mind be directed towards God, so that whether you study, or whatever you do, you aim only at pleasing God. This precept is the first in importance, because it is the end of all the other precepts, and above all others in excellence. It raises us to real and intimate friendship with God.

APPLICATION. If God had not commanded you to love Him, you should unceasingly beseech Him to permit you to do so, so great is the privilege and the worth of this love. And how shall you not then love Him, now that He commands you to love Him?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord keepeth all them that love him: but all the wicked he will destroy.* (Ps. cxliv, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you cannot perfectly fulfil this precept on earth, but only in heaven. Neverthe-

less, you should strive to fulfil it at least in part, by placing God before you as your final end in all circumstances, and above all things. Think of the miser who loves his money as his final end. Whatever happens he first thinks of putting his treasure into a place of safety, and never consents to be parted from it. Think even how much thought, labour, industry, and longing are directed towards keeping and adding to his money.

APPLICATION. Thus on a false god, such as is money, a miser ends by concentrating his whole being, esteeming that in his gold he has virtually all his good. Why cannot you succeed in doing as much for that true God, in Whom truly you find all your good?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.* (Ps. xvii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the principal means you should make use of to attain this love. One is to strive after an intimate knowledge of God by the consideration of His excellences. The saints love Him much because they know Him *face to face*, as it were. Strive therefore at least to know Him from afar off, in the benefits He has conferred upon you, in all His works of nature, of grace and of glory. The second is that you should exercise yourself in frequent acts of the love of God, and accustom yourself to do all your actions for love of God. The third and last is that in prayer you should beseech God to give you the grace to love Him. For God Who loves you infinitely desires nothing so much as to be loved in return by you.

APPLICATION. God loves you without any interest for Himself, and you too must strive to love Him

without any thought of self-interest. Make use even of the fear of punishment and the hope of reward to incite you to love Him more.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will extol thee, O God my king, and I will bless thy name for ever ; yea, for ever and for ever.* (Ps. cxliv, 1.)

MONDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE COMMANDMENT LIKE TO THE FIRST

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. (John xiii, 35.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the precept of loving your neighbour goes along with that of the love of God. The love of God is called the first and greatest commandment; the love of one's neighbour is called the second, because we ought to love our neighbour for God's sake and God for Himself, and not for the sake of our neighbour. For the rest these two precepts are so united together that one cannot love one's neighbour if one does not love God, nor love God if one does not love one's neighbour. Hence they may be said not only to have been born together but also to die together.

APPLICATION. Can you have the heart then to set so little value on this precept ? Our Lord's words are unmistakable : *And the second is like unto the first.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle ? . . . He . . . who hath not used deceit in his tongue, nor hath done evil to his neighbour.* (Ps. xiv, 1, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the love of one's neighbour consists in wishing him well in soul and in body.

Then it is that you love him *as yourself*, when you desire the good of both, as you do for yourself. This good you should desire for your neighbour precisely because he is your neighbour, so that he may be helped by you to attain to eternal beatitude along with you. Therefore you must desire this good for all men be they great or little, be they good or bad, benefactors or enemies; that so all may be your companions hereafter in heaven.

APPLICATION. If, therefore, you exclude any of these from your love, it is not possible for really true love of your neighbour to be in you, even as one who denies but one dogma of faith taught by the Church cannot have true faith. Yet how many boast of loving their neighbour, whilst they refuse this love to perhaps more than one. For to these they do not wish that good, which the law of charity requires us to have for all.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I meditated also on thy commandments, which I loved.* (Ps. cxviii, 47.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that there are three stages in this love for our neighbour. The first is that concerning him you never admit any thought that is unjust or unreasonable. For by doing so you would not only not love him, but would rather show your hatred of him. The second that you wish well to your neighbour for his own sake. Therefore when you love him either for the pleasure of his conversation, or for the good you desire from your connexion with him, though you do not thereby transgress the precept, at least you do not fulfil it. For you do not then love him as your neighbour, or as one like yourself, but merely in view of your own self and for your own advantage. Thirdly, you should not wish well

to your neighbour with cold and indifferent will, but with one that is fervent and efficacious. *In charity unfeigned.* (2 Cor. vi. 6.)

APPLICATION. How solicitous you are in order to procure whatever you imagine to be for your own profit and advantage! You should do as much for your neighbour if you love him *as yourself.* But how rarely are any to be found in the world who fulfil this great precept? Many love their neighbour with an interested love, and most with a love that may be said to be more dead than alive. Consider seriously to which of these classes your love belongs.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk; for I have lifted up my soul to thee.* (Ps. cxlii. 8.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him. (Matt. xvii, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus Christ is Son of the divine Father and loved by Him for His own sake, for He is His Son by nature. But the just are adopted sons and therefore loved of the Father for the sake of Jesus, Who has raised them to be His brethren and partakers even of the divine nature. The Father has given all His power without limitation or reserve to Jesus as a sign of His love. Hence as we have been raised by Christ to sonship through grace, so likewise we receive from Christ every other gift which is proper and proportioned to our high dignity.

APPLICATION. With what affection then should you love this Son Who is so beloved of the Father, Who has

been so loving to you as to make Himself your brother, and to raise you to sonship with God ! Rejoice with Him in this glorious title of *beloved* and in the glory that He enjoys at the right hand of the Father. Strive to the utmost to be united by love to Christ, Who has done so much for you, and from Whom alone you can hope for your greatest good of all.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God will save Sion, and they that love his name shall dwell therein.* (Ps. lxviii, 36, 37.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Father by *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* would signify that He is not only pleased to make to dwell all the plenitude of the Godhead in the sacred humanity, but that He is pleased to do through His Son all the good He desires for all men. *He hath purposed to re-establish all things in Christ* (Eph. i, 9, 10), rescuing men from the slavery of sin and bestowing on them grace and glory. Now is it not the highest marvel that the Father should have been pleased to give His beloved Son as Saviour for us miserable creatures, without any advantage on His part, and without any merit on ours ? Such are the wonders of divine love !

APPLICATION. Have you not yet learnt how to love Him Who has so loved you ? The love of God towards you is made known by what He has done for you. You should also show your love for God by what you do for Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me ?* (Ps. cxv, 12.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY then in consequence of this loving decree of the Father that all your good should come through the hands of His divine Son, with

what confidence you should have recourse to Christ in all your needs to obtain all that you desire. But if you desire that Christ should hear you, you must hear Him, and do all that He your Master teaches you. To obtain benefits from earthly princes it is necessary to present your requests, to redouble your solicitations ; but in order to obtain favours and graces from Christ, it behoves you rather to listen to Him than to supplicate ; *Hear ye him.*

APPLICATION. Therefore if you will give your mind to all that He teaches you by His doctrine, and by His examples, doing all that He asks of you, you will deserve to be promptly heard. He will pour upon you the fulness of His treasures.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I cried to thee, O Lord : I said, Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.* (Ps. cxli, 6.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not. (Luke xii, 46.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in Scripture three days are said to be in a special manner days of the Lord. The first is that of the universal judgment : *the great day of the Lord.* The second is that of the particular judgment. *The day of the Lord shall come like a thief.* The third is that day of tribulation, which is a judgment previous to the particular one, by which God tries a man to prove whether he is faithful or not. *Every man's work shall be made manifest*, says the Apostle (1 Cor. iii, 13) ; and of the time which God has chosen to make known what a man is, the

Apostle says : *The day of the Lord shall declare it.*

APPLICATION. Think now, whilst still there is time, what your work will be shown to be on each of these three days of judgment.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God is the Judge. One he putteth down, and another he lifteth up.* (Ps. lxxiv, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that at the day of the universal judgment *every man's work shall be manifest.* All the most secret actions must come to light before the eyes of the whole universe. It will then avail you nought, to have now used so many artifices to hide the malice of your heart and actions from the eyes of those among whom you live. At the particular judgment too *his work shall be manifest.* Then shall the poor man who was abandoned and neglected like Lazarus, be brought and laid to rest in Abraham's bosom, and the rich man who was courted, flattered, and envied, shall be dragged down by the demons into hell, with no hope of ever changing his lot throughout all eternity. The third judgment, when *his work shall be manifest*, is the day of tribulation in which God tries a man in order to make him know what he is. Are you not often a different person in affliction from what you show yourself in prosperity ? In this consists the judgment God makes of you in tribulation.

APPLICATION. Reflect now what rôle you will play in these great acts. If in trials and in sickness you are not strong and faithful, you will not be among the number of those of whom it is written : *God hath tried them and found them to be worthy of himself.* (Wis. iii, 5.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord will not cast off his people ; neither will he forsake his own inheritance until justice be turned into judgment, and*

they that are near it are all the upright in heart. (Ps. xciii, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that all these three judgments are said by the Apostle to be made by fire. *The fire shall try of what sort it is* (ibid.) ; just as by fire true gold is distinguished from the false. At the day of universal judgment, the fire that will devastate the universe will likewise separate the reprobate from the elect. The latter will receive no hurt whilst the reprobate will be severely proved. In the particular judgment, the fire of purgatory will prove the elect but the fire of hell the reprobate. Finally in the judgment of tribulation, the true gold will be distinguished from the false, the good from the bad. For by the fire of suffering and affliction, the good will stand firm and resist, the evil will give way and will perish.

APPLICATION. If perchance you feel deeply the affliction by which God tries you, do not be thereby discouraged. It is enough that you remain faithful, not indeed by your strength alone, but by the strength of grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have passed through fire and water, and thou hast brought us out into a refreshment.* (Ps. lxv, 12.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE THINGS OF GOD

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his justice. (Matt. vi, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that if you will distinguish within you the good from the evil and *separate the precious from the vile* (Jer. xv, 19), attributing to

God what comes to you from God, which is the precious, and attributing to yourself what comes from yourself, namely all the vile, then *thou shalt be as the mouth of God* (ibid.), because thus you will always utter the truth. All men are called liars. *All men are liars*, says the Psalmist (Ps. cxv, 11), and that because they attribute to themselves that which is not theirs.

APPLICATION. What is it you possess of things that are precious ? Is it nobility or talent or knowledge ? All these are God's gifts. Much more so are the gifts of grace. Therefore of yourself you possess nothing unless it be sin. Make then the separation by attributing to God that which is God's, and to yourself that which is yours. If there be any good in your action, say with all your heart, that it is not you that do it but God, because you never do anything of yourself alone but what is bad.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, do with me for thy name's sake : because thy mercy is sweet. Do thou deliver me.* (Ps. cviii, 21.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY a second sense, in which these words are used, namely that if wisely you separate that which is worthy of value in this world from that which deserves contempt, you will be like the mouth of God. By the mouth of men, he that is rich, powerful, and has means to enjoy himself is accounted happy : *They have called the people happy that hath these things.* (Ps. cxliii, 15.) In the language of God he that has placed in Him all his contentment is called happy : *Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* (Ibid.)

APPLICATION. How do you speak of these things ? Have you yet learned to make this necessary separation, and to prize no other good than the grace of

God? The other benefits are only good in so far as we despise them, that so we may obtain grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, and in thy name they shall rejoice all the day.* (Ps. lxxxviii, 16, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY a third sense, which is that if you would draw souls from sin, you will separate the precious from the vile, and you will thus be the mouth of God Himself, for thus will God speak by your mouth. This is the office that Jesus filled on earth, acting as the mouth-piece of His divine Father. This the apostles afterwards did and all who have followed them.

APPLICATION. Strive yourself also to do this faithfully, as far as your condition and your capacity permit you. If it be not yours to preach from the pulpit, or go to the missions to rescue souls from sin and from hell, do not at least neglect to rescue them by your good example and by good counsels in familiar discourse. These oftentimes sink more deeply into the heart than does the word of the preacher.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord will reward me according to my justice; and will repay me according to the cleanness of my hands.* (Ps. xvii, 21.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

If any man will come after me . . . let him take up his cross and follow me. (Matt. xvi, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when St. Paul would glory in nothing but in the cross of Jesus Christ (Gal. vi, 14) he might indeed have justly gloried in his

wisdom, in his piety, and also in the supernatural power given to him to work even miracles. And yet in nothing but the Cross did he glory. Blessed too will you be if one day you come to glory as he did!

APPLICATION. You professedly glory in the cross of Christ as a Christian, as a follower and disciple of Christ crucified. But how far do you glory in being crucified on the cross after the example of your divine Master, in utter destitution, in supreme sorrow, in utter contempt? The world places its glory in riches, in ease, in high positions. The glory of him who truly follows Christ has to be entirely the contrary.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.* (Ps. xxi, 7.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this glory really means, as the Apostle says, that the world is crucified to you, and you to the world. It means that you and the world have sentiments contrary to one another. The world laughs at you because you care not for those good things that it desires, and you on the contrary despise the world. The world neither loves nor appreciates you; neither do you love or appreciate the world.

APPLICATION. This is the perfect crucifixion that the Apostle confessed and gloried in, and that you must imitate according to your state of life. So may be verified in you the conclusion which the Apostle draws, *Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them and mercy.* (Ibid. 16.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and shall tell of thy power. . . . Thy Kingdom is a kingdom of all ages: and thy dominion*

endureth throughout all generations. (Ps. cxliv, 11, 13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in order to attain to this crucifixion it is necessary that the world should be dead to you, and that you should be dead to the world. The world dies to you when you actually renounce all its goods, for it has then nothing more to attract you. You die to the world when you renounce it with your heart and affections, because you can no more be attracted by it, and you are consequently as one dead to it.

APPLICATION. Consider to what extent you have really renounced with your heart's affection the world and its goods of riches, of ease and of position. True it is, that you can never reach to this blessed crucifixion and blessed death except by means of a true and strong love for Jesus crucified. This alone will detach you entirely from all things of the world. *Love is strong as death.* (Cant. viii, 6.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is the strength of his people and the protector of the salvation of his anointed.* (Ps. xxvii, 8.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOD RESISTS THE PROUD

Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart. (Matt. xi, 29.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that as a man resists another who would take from him his possessions, his reputation, or his life, so God resists the proud because he robs God of what belongs to Him alone. Of such an offence you are guilty when, because of talents and gifts of virtue, you give way to pride, you despise others and you glorify and boast of yourself, whereas

all are the gifts of God! *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* (1 Cor. iv, 7.)

APPLICATION. If then they are all God's gifts why are you vain? It is true that in acts of virtue you concur with your own free-will, but this concurrence is also God's gift. *For it is God who worketh in you.* (Phil. ii, 13.) Your body concurs in the acts of your senses, and yet it would be foolish for you to attribute these acts merely to it and not to the soul that governs it. So also your free will without grace is like a body without a soul.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am brought to nothing, and I knew not.* (Ps. lxxii, 22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that God willingly gives the riches of His grace to the humble. For they are faithful depositaries who do not steal or usurp, prizing what is given them in grateful homage to Him Who gave it. He knows that He is putting His gifts into good hands, and that all will return again unto Him like the rivers that return whence they came forth. Oh how just it is that God should be jealous of a glory which belongs to Him alone!

APPLICATION. When you humble yourself you utter the truth, and with this God is pleased. When you are proud you are a liar, and therefore are you hateful unto Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou wilt save the humble people; but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud.* (Ps. xvii, 28.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what you have to do when you undertake some difficult enterprise for the glory of God. You have first humbly to acknowledge your own nothingness, and your own weakness. Then persuade yourself that, just because of this acknow-

ledgment, God will condescend to work in you. For it will appear all the more clear that it is He alone Who works through so worthless an instrument.

APPLICATION. With such strong faith as this, you will overcome all the difficulties in the way because you have the Omnipotent with you: *And the Almighty shall be against thy enemies.* (Job xxii, 25.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my firmament, my refuge and my deliverer. My God is my helper, and in him will I put my trust. My protector and the horn of my salvation and my support.* (Ps. xvii, 3.)

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TEN LEPERS

(Read Luke xvii, 11–19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that to turn to God for help in public or private calamities is a thing common to all men. But these lepers, who had recourse to Jesus in order to be cleansed, show you the way in which you ought to go to God in order to obtain the graces you ask for. *They stood a long way off*, deeming themselves unworthy to approach Him because of their loathsome disease. *They lifted up their voices*, showing thereby a great desire to be healed. *Master, have mercy on us*, and thus they made their supplication with faith together with resignation.

APPLICATION. You should do likewise when you beg the help of God in your necessities. You must acknowledge that you are unworthy to appear in the divine presence, a leper as you are, infected by so many sins. You should show your intense desire to

be healed, by fervent and constant prayers, and with perfect confidence resign yourself to the good pleasure of God. If your prayers to God are accompanied by real humility, a lively desire, and perfect confidence and resignation, you will obtain a favourable response.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do with me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, for thy mercy is sweet. Do thou deliver me. For I am poor and needy.* (Ps. cviii, 21–22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that these ten lepers obtained the grace they asked of Jesus, of being cleansed from their leprosy, and this in the act of going to the priests as they had been commanded to do. Our Lord would hereby teach you, that in order to obtain from God what you ask, you must do what He commands you. The petitions which you present to God will certainly be heard if your actions correspond with your prayers.

APPLICATION. By the very act of praying to God, you acknowledge Him as supreme Lord and Giver of all good, and declare that you are dependent upon Him for everything. But if in your actions you obey Him not and desire to go your own way, you contradict your prayers by your actions and so render your supplications less efficacious.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said: thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.* (Ps. cxli, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that of the ten lepers only one, who was a Samaritan, returned to give thanks to God for the benefit he had received. *Were not ten made clean, and where are the nine?* Thus Jesus Christ gives us to see how much more anxious we are to go to God in our necessities, than to show ourselves

grateful afterwards for having been aided and delivered in them.

APPLICATION. For how many benefits are you not indebted to God ? And how little gratitude perhaps have you shown Him hitherto ! Gratitude moreover opens the channels for the reception of new and greater gifts. Therefore this Samaritan who *went back with a loud voice glorifying God, giving thanks*, obtained the health of his soul besides the health of his body. *Thy faith hath made thee whole.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give glory to the Lord, for he is good ; for his mercy endureth forever.* (Ps. CV, 1.)

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DEATH

Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven. (Matt. vi, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how great is the misery of him, who has placed all his peace in the good things of this earth, in its honours, pleasures, riches. He cannot think of death. He cannot think of that for which alone life was given him, the preparation for that passage on which depends a whole eternity of reward or of punishment. And observe that in Holy Writ it is not the expectation, but the remembrance, of death that is said to be bitter to such a man : *O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee* ! (Ecclus. xli, 1.) For such men never expect it and never prepare themselves for it. If they hear, or see under their very eyes the death, now of a friend, now of a fellow-citizen, now of a relative, great is the anguish that fills them. Immediately they think out some

reason, by which they promise themselves not to die, at least of that sickness, or in that way.

APPLICATION. Deplore the misery of so great a part of mankind, and strive to avoid it yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Remember what my substance is, for hast thou made all the children of men in vain? Who is the man that shall live and shall not see death?* (Ps. lxxxviii, 48.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the intense bitterness men so unprepared will feel when death separates them not only from their bodies, but from all those good things that they loved even as much as their bodies, and far more than they loved their souls. Then indeed those miserable people will cry out: *Doth bitter death separate in this manner?* (1 Kings xv, 32.) They will reply each time: Yes, even so: *in this manner it separates* from all the pleasures of this world: *it separates* from friends, from relatives, from country: *it separates* from honours, dignities and riches.

APPLICATION. Oh how much better would these unhappy ones have done to have separated themselves voluntarily beforehand little by little, and that with merit, from those things, from which at last they will be torn forcibly by death to their great sorrow.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* (Ps. cxv, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how you are bound to thank God, if He has given you the grace of detachment in heart and spirit from these goods of earth now before your death. The good things of the earth the world imagines it cannot subsist without, and therefore it cannot cease from loving them. But he who

has proved that it is possible so to live, and even to live contentedly, oh how much more easily then he separates himself from them.

APPLICATION. If you desire that death should not bring you sorrow, act now in such a manner that you may have nothing which it shall take from you against your will.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God. Enlighten my eyes that I may never sleep in death.* (Ps. xii, 4.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES

Love your enemies. (Matt. v, 44.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that this precept of loving one's enemy is in itself difficult because self-love and human nature incline to the contrary. But in reality it is not as difficult as it might appear, because He Who gave this precept gives together with the precept the grace to fulfil it, and grace gives strength to triumph over nature and self-love: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.* (Phil. iv, 13.)

APPLICATION. Reflect how many have by the help of grace conquered themselves, even so far as to shed their blood for love of Jesus. And cannot you by the help of grace attain to that degree of self-conquest, that will enable you to forgive your enemy?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art, O God, my strength.* (Ps. xlii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that by this precept Christ does not demand that you love the evil will of your enemy. He wishes only that you love him as your neighbour, as the creature and the image of God,

and as redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, Who for you His enemy went so far as to give His blood and His life. This precept of loving your enemy obliges you to love him even as the rest of mankind, not excluding him from the ordinary benevolence you show towards your neighbour. Thus then you cannot lawfully deny your enemy those marks of kindness, which you ordinarily show towards those with whom you live.

APPLICATION. Observe well what your disposition and practice is, in showing these acts of common benevolence towards those who dislike you, or do you wrong. Do not say that you have pardoned them, because that is not enough, if you do not show it by external acts. Our Lord says : *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.* (John xiii, 35.) Thus it is necessary that you manifest to all that you love and do not hate your enemy.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is he that considereth the needy and the poor ; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.* (Ps. xl, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ demands by this precept that you should not only love your enemy but also that you should do him good, so that you be not like the sterile fig tree which He cursed. There are two ways in which you must do him good, the one negative, by not offending him : *The love of our neighbour worketh no ill.* (Rom. xiii, 10.), the other positive : *Do good to them that hate you.* (Matt. v, 44.) The former is of precept, the latter of counsel.

APPLICATION. No benefit you could render your neighbour will bring so much merit and consolation to your soul, as the good you do your enemy

for the love of Jesus. For this is the most certain sign that you are a child of God: *that you may be the children of your Father*; and it is at the same time the most sure sign that you truly love our Blessed Lord. The stronger the fire the further it extends its flames; and the love of God is so much the more robust, the more it is extended by the grace of God to benefit also your enemy.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God is merciful and will forgive their sins; and will not destroy them.* (Ps. lxxvii, 38.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE BENIGNITY OF GOD

One is good, God. (Matt. xix, 17.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how advantageous it is for you to realise how patiently God bears with your many sins, defects, and negligences. He bears with you, not because He cannot abandon you and let you utterly fall away, but because He will not do so. He awaits, that in the meantime you may repent and amend.

APPLICATION. Observe that the goodness of God not only invites you to amend and do penance, but as far as depends on Him, urges you, stimulates and forces you with His lights and inspirations. How then can you resist, when you consider that a God of so great majesty tolerates all the contempt that you show, only in order that you, vile creature that you are, may not perish? Is not such marvellous goodness enough to move a heart of stone? *Therefore the Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you.* (Isa. xxx, 18.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes have sent forth springs of water : because they have not kept thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 136.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the great evil that you do, in presuming to offend your God the more freely because He has shown Himself so benign in bearing with you. Have you in mind to be the more wicked because He has been so good to you ? It was for you He clothed Himself in human flesh ; for you He poured forth so much sweat and so much blood, dying on the cross for you.

APPLICATION. Consider well what a heartless return is this of yours ! And if you carefully weigh it, such it really is, because the goodness of God does not move you *to penitence*, but rather *to impenitence*, by multiplying your sins. *Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?* (Rom. ii, 4.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify thy name for ever. For great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell.* (Ps. lxxxv, 12–13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the benignity of God is a favour given quite freely, and that consequently it may abandon you when it pleases Him. How is it possible that you do not tremble to think of this ? What would become of you did He abandon you, as you too truly deserve ? Do you imagine that the benignity of God has no limits within which to be contained ? Has it not number and time prescribed by His inscrutable ordinance ?

APPLICATION. And who can say whether that number and that time be not already completed for you ! The divine mercy is in itself unlimited, but

it is limited in its acts and in its effects. Do not then any longer abuse the goodness of God with which until now He has borne with you. Endeavour without delay to avail yourself of it in order to compensate for the sins you have committed, and to amend your life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn not away thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.* (Ps. cxlii, 7.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PUNISHMENTS OF HELL

Fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell. (Matt. x, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the fire of hell is called by the Prophet a *devouring fire* (Isa. xxxiii, 14), not because it consumes and destroys the damned, but to show forth its action and its fierceness. Our fires consume by little and little, but do not devour at once. The fire of hell does all in one instant; and with that same fierceness with which it first acts upon the damned it will act eternally, without ever remitting any degree of its activity. What then will be the lot of the poor wretch who is condemned to have his place in such a fire for ever? Were you condemned to remain in a prison, the walls, the floor, the roof of which were all of fire, and where there was no air to breathe except that of fire, how would it be with you? What will it be then to have a still more dreadful fire, one that penetrates internally even to our innermost being?

APPLICATION. Will you then for a fleeting vapour of glory, for a caprice, for a momentary pleasure, put

yourself in danger of going for ever and ever to that most terrible dwelling place ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell.* (Ps. xciii, 17.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what horror would be yours, if you were condemned to live enclosed within a den of fierce wild beasts. Think then what it will be to dwell in hell confined in a similar way. Furthermore every damned soul will be to the others as it were a fiery wild beast seeking to devour them.

APPLICATION. Remember now that if you go to hell you will not be alone. Does it however seem to be any solace to have companions such as these ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They are laid in hell like sheep ; death shall feed upon them.* (Ps. xlviii, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this fire is called devouring, because it possesses only the torment of fire without its splendour. *The voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire.* (Ps. xxviii, 7.) God has ordained that its flame should have as it were a divided power of burning and of tormenting, but not of lighting or illuminating.

APPLICATION. Think then how it would be, if it were your lot to remain eternally burning in that profound darkness. Imagine rightly that there are many perhaps like unto yourself buried in the lowest depths of this abyss ! Ponder deeply, make practical resolutions of amendment, begin at once to put them into execution.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The wicked shall be turned into hell.* (Ps. ix, 18.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHARITY OF CHRIST

Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John xv, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that it was by dying a most painful death for you upon the tree of the cross, that Christ rescued you from the slavery of hell, though He could have done so by a single tear or a sigh. He wished, however, to win your heart so securely, that you would be unable to live any more for yourself, but would be forced of sheer necessity to live for Him alone. This is what the Apostle would signify by saying: *The charity of Christ presseth us.* For it urged him to labour incessantly in the service of our Lord, and to spend his whole being in winning souls that are so dear to Him.

APPLICATION. How far do you experience this desire within yourself? If you do not feel it, you should at least strive to obtain it, as your name of follower of Jesus Christ demands.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He is my God and my Saviour; he is my protector; I shall be moved no more.* (Ps. lxi, 3).

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the Apostle does not say, *The death of Christ presseth us,* but *The charity.* For if all that Christ suffered for you should greatly move you, much more so should that love which made Him endure His sufferings for you. All that Christ deigned to suffer for your salvation is as nothing in comparison to what He would have suffered, had such been the will of His Father. All those rivers of affliction and opprobrium were insufficient to quench the thirst of His unquenchable love.

APPLICATION. If then all that Christ suffered for you should move you to live only for Him, the love with which He bore these sufferings should even compel you to do so. For the sufferings had their end, but His love was unending. He bears towards you also to-day, whole and entire, all that love which made Him descend from the bosom of the divine Father, to clothe Himself in human flesh, to ascend the cross, and sacrifice Himself for your redemption. *Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* (Ps. cii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what it is to live for yourself. It is to live according to your own will, for your own glory, and at your ease. This should have all come to an end in you, seeing that Christ has gone so far as to die for you with so much love. Since then He has given His own life of infinite value for you, what great thing is it that you should give your life for Him, you who are worthless and worthy even of death ?

APPLICATION. If, however, you cannot have the glory of dying for Him, you are bound at least to live for Him. You must live to love Him, live in order to seek that He be loved by others, and to promote to your utmost His divine glory.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let all that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee ; and let such as love thy salvation say always : The Lord be magnified.* (Ps. xxxix, 17.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HUMILITY

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke xiv, 11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that, in order to find matter for humiliation, you have no need to seek it outside of yourself; it is within you. *Thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee* (Mich. vi, 14). Were you to look outside of yourself it might be easy to become proud, because possibly you might see yourself to a certain extent set in authority, praised, appreciated and loved by others. But such will not be the case if you look well within yourself.

APPLICATION. It will suffice if you consider seriously what in fact you were in truth, what you are, and what you will be. Each of these three considerations will be enough to humble you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor and needy and my heart is troubled within me.* (Ps. cviii, 22.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the sins of your past life. To what a miserable condition were you reduced when you fell into the power of Satan, and then became his vile slave, deserving those flames prepared for him and you in hell? Now, God grant that by His infinite mercy you are out of that state. Reflect, however, how ungrateful you have shown yourself to Him Who rescued you from it.

APPLICATION. Consider then how far you correspond to the mercy and love of God. See to what extent you are still a slave to your disorderly affections, how vain, unmortified, impatient and inclined to commit the worst possible sins. How will it go in the

future with your unstable and weak will? The pillars of the firmament have fallen; what will then become of you who are such a frail reed? May not a strong temptation be perhaps enough to overthrow you? And once overcome, who knows if you will ever be able to rise again, or how you will die? Is not all this enough to humble you?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord preserves the little ones; I was humbled and he delivered me.* (Ps. cxiv, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if in you there is anything of good, it has not its source within or from you. It all comes to you from above, for the arid soil of your soul is not capable of itself of producing anything but thorns. There *in the midst of thee* you have nothing but matter for self-humiliation. But this humility must not be merely speculative; it must also be practical.

APPLICATION. Within your heart therefore entertain a really low esteem of yourself. Attach no importance whatever to external praise that may be given you, but refer it all at once to God in thought, in affection, and in word.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am needy and poor; O God help me. Thou art my helper and my deliverer: O Lord, make no delay.* (Ps. lxix, 6.)

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS

(Read Matt. vi, 24–33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the saying of our Lord, *No man can serve two masters*, concerns every one of us, but more especially those who would wish to

serve God and the world at the same time. This is an impossibility for, as St. James tells us, *whosoever will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God.* (James iv, 4.) Christ has declared war with the world, and the world with Christ, and it is not possible for any one to stand well with both. Above all, Christ will not be served in part; He wills to have all. He then, who will have part with the world, will be the servant of the world and not of Christ.

APPLICATION. In embracing a good and a more perfect life, you have proposed to embrace the service of Christ and to abandon that of the world. Let, then, those who want to be friends of the world serve the world. Do you then attend well to the service of Christ, in order that you may be the friend of Christ, without being solicitous about the things of the world. Say to Him, with all your heart: *I am thy servant.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am thy servant: O give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies.* (Ps. cxviii, 125.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the great contrast there is between Christ and the world. Christ invites you to serve Him in poverty, in humiliation, in hatred and abnegation of yourself. The world, on the contrary, would have you serve it by seeking pleasures and delights, honours and position. How then can the service of Christ ever be in agreement with that of the world? Christ not only proposes to you to embrace His cross, but He sweetens it by internal consolations and with the helps of His grace, with peace of heart, and with the hope of eternal reward, whereas the world promises you pleasures, and gives nothing but affliction and distress. It mingles so

much disquiet of spirit with the goods it gives, that even one of its sorrows is sufficient to embitter all its joys.

APPLICATION. Think of any one who serves Christ with all his heart. See how much more contentedly he always lives than does any other who seeks only after the things of this world.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity; quicken thou me in thy way.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the reward which the world gives its followers in this life, and the reward that Christ gives. The world, after having afflicted you, will in the next life let you find nothing better than flames and acute suffering. Christ, on the contrary, in the midst of the crosses of this life gives His servants to enjoy an abundance of peace and consolation that sweetens every trouble. In the future life He gives them an eternal kingdom, and a beatitude so great, that it will cause them to be immersed in an ocean of endless joy.

APPLICATION. Does not therefore the service of Christ seem to you more desirable than that of the world? Leave then altogether the ways of the world and consecrate all your service to Christ. Thank Him that, by means of His divine grace and your faithful correspondence to it, He has led you to renounce the spirit of the world in order the better to follow Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give me understanding, and I will search thy law; and I will keep it with my whole heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 34.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ETERNITY

These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting. (Matt. xxv, 46.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the house you here inhabit is not your real home, but only a lodging which gives you shelter for a short time. Nor is your real resting-place the sepulchre, from which, indeed, you will not issue except at the universal destruction of the world, then to find all, that you once so admired and made so much of, reduced to ashes. *Man*, says Ecclesiastes, shall go into *the house of his eternity.* (Eccles. xii, 5.) For you shall not go into the sepulchre nor dwell there; only your already decaying body will be taken there. Your real eternal house to which you will go, will be either heaven or hell, but with what a difference!

APPLICATION. Can you now say which will be yours? May it please God that you may not have reason to answer me, *Hell is my house.* (Job xvii, 13.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days.* (Ps. xxii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is for you now to choose that which you desire. *Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death.* (Jer. xxi, 8.) Will you be so foolish as to choose rather to lose your soul than to save it? Before, however, making so fatal a choice, consider seriously on the one hand what it means to be surrounded in hell by all that fire for all eternity, so that there, after you have passed thousands and millions of years, your sufferings

will only be beginning. You who fear so much and tremble at the slight and the brief pains of this life, are you not dismayed at the inconceivable torments of eternity? On the other hand, lift up your eyes to heaven to see the eternal peace and perpetual joy that each one of the blessed souls enjoys in that abode of happiness. *Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads* (Isa. xxxv, 10.)

APPLICATION. Think well about this, and as it were in the very sight of such different dwelling-places, choose which pleases you most whilst still you may.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* (Ps. xxvi, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how many there are, who labour and struggle more to deserve hell, than you are obliged to labour and to suffer in order to gain heaven. What folly then is not yours if, when choosing between two houses of eternity that differ as much as do heaven and hell, you do not endeavour to secure for yourself the former with less labour than others will use to get the latter.

APPLICATION. Ponder well, for example, upon the difference there is between the trouble that many persons endure in order to be revenged, or in order to give vent to their evil passions, and that which you have to bear to lead a fervent life, and you will perceive how far less is that of yours. If the constant observance of God's commandments and the laws of the Church seems hard or painful to you, reflect on the eternal sufferings, from which it is sure to deliver you, and the eternal blessings that you will gain by this subjection to the cross of Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Decline from evil and do good, and dwell for ever and ever.* (Ps. xxvi, 27.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RICHES

Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. (Luke vi, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Blessed Lord does not use the word *Woe* here merely to denote some horrible and deplorable evil. It is a threat and prediction of woe to the rich; not indeed because they rob, nor because they oppress the poor, but because they have their consolation in this world. *For you have your consolation.*

APPLICATION. Can it be then that instead of pitying the rich, you envy them and their greatness? When therefore you behold the pomp of their palaces and the magnificence of their courts, be not borne away by admiration, but say rather: *Woe to you that are rich!*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Better is little to the just than the great riches of the wicked.* (Ps. xxxvi, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY why it is that the rich are to be pitied. It is because their consolation here is a sign that they will not have it hereafter, as it was said to the rich glutton: *Thou didst receive good things in thy life time.* (Luke xvi, 25.) And it is especially so with the rich because of the greater ease with which, by reason of their money, they can give vent to their passions, and satisfy the irregular cravings of their corrupt nature. Thus it is that they fall into

innumerable sins and hasten onwards to perdition. How much better is it, then, not to have here the consolations of living as one wills. For it is an inviolable law that we cannot rejoice both in this world and in the next!

APPLICATION. Thank rather our Blessed Lord with all your heart for having drawn you out of this peril. The less consolations you shall have here, the more you shall enjoy hereafter. *Woe to you rich! Blessed are the poor!* Oh what a difference between these two sentences that issue from the mouth of uncreated Wisdom itself!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold these are sinners, and yet prospering in the world they have obtained riches!* (Ps. lxxii, 12.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ, in pronouncing the rich unhappy, intended to denote those who have their hearts attached to their riches, and have placed in them all the means of satisfying their desires. He did not speak of the wealthy whose hearts are not set upon their riches, and who use them in the ways that God permits and intends and commands. So likewise He only calls those blessed who are voluntarily or who are spiritually poor. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, and not those who are poor quite against their will, and who love, and who desire to have, riches and the goods of this world.

APPLICATION. To which class of the poor do you belong? Do you still let your heart be attached to money, and envy those who possess it? This most terrible threat of Christ, *Woe to you*, may be directed against you, more than against many a man of wealth. For many such live with their hearts more detached from riches than is yours.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He shall spare the poor and needy : and he shall save the souls of the poor.* (Ps. lxxi, 13.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REWARD OF HUMILITY

I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. (Luke x, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY why this confession of praise and thanksgiving was made by Christ to His Father. It was because He had hidden from the wise those admirable truths and doctrines which appeal to the understanding and had been so foolishly despised by men, because beyond their capacity. He had hidden also from the prudent those truths and doctrines, which concern the will and which also had been arrogantly derided by them, because they are contrary to their perverted ideas. On the other hand, He praised and thanked the Father in that He had revealed all these same truths to the humble who promptly embraced them. Consider therefore how beneficial is humility in the school of Christ, how prejudicial is pride. True wisdom and true prudence exist not except in Christian humility, which makes one a little child and one dear to Christ.

APPLICATION. Reflect therefore how necessary for you is this humble simplicity. It is opposed to that empty esteem of self, which in reality is no more than the most foolish and fatal ignorance.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The law of the Lord is without spot converting souls ; the testimony of*

the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones. (Ps. xviii, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY in what manner the Father hides truths and doctrines from the proud, and reveals them to the humble. He reveals them to the humble, by giving them clear and special light so that they may know and understand them. To the proud He denies such special light, but gives light sufficient to understand if they will but heed, and thus renders them inexcusable. For this it is that Christ praises and thanks His Father, for having shown mercy to the humble and His justice to the proud.

APPLICATION. What a great motive then we have to be humble! By yourself you are unable to do one single act that is of any worth, if God did not show His mercy to you by giving you that light and that special aid, which He always gives to the humble and denies to the proud, not being by justice bound to give it you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The declaration of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to little ones.* (Ps. cxviii, 130.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ calls the Father by the name of Father and also of Lord. *Father, Lord of heaven and earth.* (Luke x, 21.) He is Lord in the justice which He exercises towards the proud, Father in the mercy He shows to the humble: *God resisteth the proud*, as Lord, *but to the humble He giveth grace.* (1 Peter v. 5.)

APPLICATION. If you desire that He should be to you also a loving Father in all your needs, you must humbly and trustfully go to Him even as a little child runs to the arms of its parents.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my*

helper and my protector ; in him hath my heart confided, and I have been helped. (Ps. xxvii, 7.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FEAR OF THE LORD

I will show you whom you shall fear.
(Luke xii, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what great efforts are needful in order to raise the spiritual edifice. How many acts of self-abnegation, of obedience and of humiliation, of mortification and of penance! And yet this edifice, that takes so many years to raise with so much pains and suffering, can all be destroyed in a moment. One mortal sin, even one of thought, will do it. And if the moment after the sin God sent death to you, or if He did not help you with the abundance of His grace to rise again, you would assuredly be lost.

APPLICATION. O how many spiritual edifices far more beautiful than yours have been thus destroyed! Think of the awful falls of many who were once so fervent. And you who have not done even a small part of that good which they did, should you not in all justice fear for yourself?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The gentiles shall fear thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.* (Ps. ci, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY what is the reason of this great danger. It is because God, without doing you the least injustice, might at any time deprive you of those special helps of grace of which you stand in need at every moment, in order to prevent your falling into mortal sin. The good you may have done in the

past does not in the least oblige God to give you that fresh grace, which you need from moment to moment if you are to persevere in good.

APPLICATION. Thus perseverance is a gratuitous gift of God not only for the end of your life, but for every moment of it. He might deny you this gift without doing you a wrong, since He has not received from you any benefit. On the contrary He has bestowed on you innumerable benefits for which you have been ungrateful to Him. Oh how this truth should make you humble and fearful!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, what is man that thou makest thyself known unto him? . . . Man is like to vanity: his days pass away as a shadow.* (Ps. cxliii, 3–4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in this great danger your greatest safety lies in continual fear. Even as a person who has to cross a high and narrow bridge, under which rushes a roaring torrent, grasps tightly by the hand and clings to the person who guides him, so must you hold fast to the fear of God and have always before your eyes the necessity of the help of God, and be always earnestly asking for it. Perseverance is indeed a free gift of God, but one which he who asks aright will infallibly receive. Some He answers more quickly, some more slowly according to His good pleasure.

APPLICATION. You cannot know when or where God will answer you. Therefore, no matter how much you may have prayed to God up to the present moment, you cannot be sure to persevere. Cease not therefore to plead with great and ever increasing earnestness.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I, O Lord, have*

cried to thee; and in the morning my prayer shall prevent thee. (Ps. lxxxvii, 14.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JESUS CHRIST OUR MODEL

He that followeth me walketh not in darkness. (John viii, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the eternal Father sent His divine Son on earth to clothe Himself with our flesh, principally in order that He might be our example and our model. To this model therefore we must conform our lives, because all our perfection consists in reproducing in ourselves, as far as we may, the divine perfections and in making ourselves images of Jesus Christ. Every faithful soul is bound to conform himself to this divine exemplar, if he would be among the number of the elect. Much more so is every one bound, who desires and professes to be a more intimate follower and companion of Jesus.

APPLICATION. How have you striven up till now to conform yourself to the example of Jesus? Can you truthfully say with holy Job: *My foot hath followed His steps, I have kept His way?* (Job xxiii, 11.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths. I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed to keep the judgments of thy justice.* (Ps. cxviii, 105–106.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY in what things Jesus should be especially imitated, namely, in all that which He ceaselessly made profession of from His birth even unto His death, poverty, suffering, pain and contempt. During the thirty-three years that He dwelt

on earth He did not always teach, or preach, or heal the sick, or work miracles ; but He always lived in poverty, in suffering and in contempt.

APPLICATION. What kind of attachment have you to these three inseparable companions of Christ ? How far do you seek them ? How do you accept them when you meet them, by feeling some of the effects of poverty, in suffering some illness, in receiving some wrong or some insult ? These are the marks and features most proper to make you like to the image of Jesus Christ. *Made conformable to the image of his Son.* (Rom. viii, 29.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor and in labours from my youth.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how you ought to imitate Him. Does it seem to you to be an undertaking beyond your strength to copy the virtues of Christ ? Do not lose heart, for equality is not asked of you but only a likeness, that consists in following Christ at least from afar. (4 Kings xviii, 6.) Neither does our Lord require that you imitate Him in everything, but only in that which is proper to your own state of life. All the faithful are members of the mystical body of Christ : *We are one body in Christ.* (Rom. xii, 5.)

APPLICATION. All the members of our body have different functions, the eye one, the hand another, the foot a third : *All the members have not the same office.* Your function, as a member of the mystical body of Christ, will be to conform yourself to Jesus in the observance of God's law, the mortifications, the duties and labour, which are proper to your state of life, making it your study in all to form yourself to an image of the divine model : *To be made conformable to the image of his Son.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Perfect thou my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved.* (Ps. xvi, 5.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PEACE IN GOD

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. (John xiv, 27.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that those of whom Isaias says *My people shall sit in the beauty of peace* (Isa. xxxii, 18) are those who have fought for a long time and conquered their inclinations, and who now possess joy in the conquest of themselves. Peace is *the tranquillity of order.* And this peace is enjoyed by him who has conquered his own inclinations. For he stands well as regards his neighbour, whom he does not envy, with whom he disputes not, over whom he does not domineer, knowing how to live in peace with all. He is well with himself, for his appetites are under the control of reason. He is well with God, because he is in all things subject and submissive to Him.

APPLICATION. Oh how blessed are you if, by the conquest of your own inclinations, you know how to obtain this so desirable state of peace !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Great peace have they that love thy law ; and for them there is no stumbling-block.* (Ps. cxviii, 165.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, by this conquest of self, you will not only live in peace now but after death shall, as Isaias goes on to say, *dwell in the tabernacles of confidence.* These tabernacles are the sacred

wounds of your divine Lord, where you will experience so much the greater confidence in Him as in life your reverential fear for Him was the greater.

APPLICATION. You will come to learn that so good a father will not abandon you in your extreme need at your death. He will then give you defence from your enemies in the shelter of His sacred wounds, and you will be like *the dove in the clefts of the rock.* (Cant. ii, 14.) Thus though you are never secure until the very end, you will be filled with entire confidence in that hour in the merits of Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said : thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living.* (Ps. cxli, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that after this peace which you will enjoy in life, and after this confidence in death, you will dwell in the full repose of paradise. This will render you absolutely content and filled with satisfaction in seeing God. For as God has no need of anything outside of Himself, so in heaven you will have no need of anything outside of Him, for you will have God within you and the certainty of never losing Him.

APPLICATION. But, in order to attain to that truly precious repose, it is necessary that you should not desire to rest before the time. If you wish for peace, it is often necessary that you should wage war, by conquering your passions and by mortifying your inclinations. If you would have confidence in death, it is necessary that you should first have fear, and live with solicitude not to offend your Lord Who defends you, and has so often to plead for you. If you desire rest after death, it is needful that labour should now precede it, so that you must spend yourself wholly

in the service of God, until *you shall rest from your labours.* (Apoc. xiv, 13.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord.* (Ps. xxx, 25.)

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE WIDOW OF NAIM

(Read Luke vii, 11–16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that it is not without a divine purpose that the gospels recount the raising from the dead by Christ of three persons, all of different ages, a very young girl, the daughter of a ruler of the Synagogue, a young man, son of the widow of Naim, and then Lazarus, the brother of Magdalen and Martha. We should learn therefrom that death does not respect any age, nor exempt any condition of life. Armed with bow and sword, with the latter it strikes the aged to whom it is nearer, and with the former the young who think themselves quite out of reach.

APPLICATION. Whatever may be your age, be always prepared for death. As both the young and the old die daily, when they least of all expect it, be persuaded that it will be the same with you. Heed you not what our Lord says in the Gospel? *Be you then also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come.* (Luke xii, 40.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He will brandish his sword; he hath bent his bow.* (Ps. vii, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in these three dead persons, raised to life by Christ, are represented three classes of people, who were dead in sin but have been

raised to life again by Christ. In the death of the young girl, are represented those people who fall into sin through ignorance and through weakness of nature; in the death of the young man, those who sin from the impulse of vehement passion and in the death of Lazarus, those who fall into sin through the malice of their own will.

APPLICATION. Under which of these classes do your falls and sins place you? It may be that, by the earnest life you lead for God, you are ordinarily guarded from more serious falls and from mortal sins. Still it is very probable that you daily fall into venial sins. See then whether your daily falls arise from weakness of nature, or from the assaults of your strong passions, or with full deliberation from the malice of your will. For even though all of them may be culpable yet not all are equally hurtful. Through weakness even the saints sometimes fall; by the force of passions not conquered the imperfect fall; and from malice of will, those who may easily fall further into mortal sin.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled, and my soul is troubled exceedingly: but thou, O Lord, how long?* (Ps. vi, 3, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ at the death of the child forbade all weeping, and that at the death of the young man, He said to the widowed mother: *Weep not.* But at the death of Lazarus He not only suffered the two sisters Martha and Magdalen to weep, but He Himself also wept. *Jesus wept.* (John xi, 35.)

APPLICATION. By the death of Lazarus are represented, as we have meditated, those who fall through the malice of their will. Such as sin gravely, especi-

ally when and where they are furnished with much light and protection, will be more severely dealt with. For their fall is more wilful and malicious and most hateful in the sight of heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, my God, enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death.* (Ps. xii, 4.)

MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SELF-CONQUEST

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself. (Matt. xvi, 24.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that your enemy the devil delights in nothing more than in seeing you satisfying your every desire, and giving way to your disorderly inclinations. For he knows well that, like an uncurbed horse, they will by little and little bring you to the precipice. Therefore it is a matter of joy when he perceives that you so easily leave the reins loose upon the neck.

APPLICATION. It is necessary therefore that you accustom yourself to deny your inclinations even in lawful things. Otherwise, from things permissible you will soon pass on to give way easily to things unlawful.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath longed greatly to desire thy ordinances at all times.* (Ps. cxviii, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this self-abnegation is imposed on you without limitation. Fasting, abstinence and prayer have for you their assigned times, but abnegation of your will has no appointed time. It must be always ready and at hand in all things.

What time is there when a vicious horse does not need the curb ?

APPLICATION. So it is with your will. You must always hold it in restraint and curb, so that it may not swerve from the right path or lead you over the precipice.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, my portion; I have said, I would keep thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 57.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you must not give way to fear as if this self-conquest were a matter of great difficulty, because by acquiring the habit it will become every day more easy for you. *A horse not broken becometh stubborn.* (Ecclus. xxx, 8.) It is hard to control and to guide it, when it has been allowed its own way for any length of time.

APPLICATION. The same will you also experience with your own will, if you accustom yourself to subject it at all times, and in all that happens to you, whether by means of your superiors, your equals, or your inferiors. For when your will finds that it cannot always obtain what it demands, it will cease to ask except for such things as it knows it may justly obtain.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Through God we shall do mightily, and he shall bring to nothing them that afflict us.* (Ps. lix, 14.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

EVANGELICAL PERFECTION

Be you therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. v, 48.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that these words apply to all Christians. For all are bound to observe the law of the Gospel with greater perfection than were

the Hebrews bound to observe that of Moses. The Mosaic Law was directed rather to the acquisition of earthly goods, and was a heavier burden because of the many precepts it contained, and of the much less help which the people had to keep it. The Evangelical law is ordained entirely for the attainment of heavenly goods. It is a yoke much more bearable, and much greater is the aid which grace gives to bear it.

APPLICATION. You have had the blessing of being born in the bosom of Christianity, in the days of so sweet a law, and therefore enjoy so many helps of grace. Think how much more, then, you are bound to observe it, and how much greater will be your condemnation if you fail to do so.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *How I have loved thy law, O Lord; it is my meditation all the day long.* (Ps. cxviii, 97.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY those words of the Apostle, *Therefore ought we more diligently to observe the things which we have heard, lest perhaps we let them slip.* (Hebr. ii, 1.) They apply most of all to those more worthy Christians, who, detached at least in mind and heart from the world, attend more exclusively to the practice of virtue.

APPLICATION. By your very name of Christian, you are therefore bound to the more careful observance of all that God has taught you by His lights and by His divine inspirations. He gives you so many helps and devout inspirations, that you may ever become more perfect. Hence if you neglect these gifts and these lights He will be justly offended. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee.* (Jer. vi, 8.) An ordinary goodness must

not suffice you. Place yourself in the way of higher virtue, and thus you will assuredly profit by it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I looked for thy salvation, O Lord, and I loved thy commandments.* (Ps. cxviii, 166.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that these words of the Apostle apply especially to those, whose aim is to help their neighbour. For such have more need than others to be most careful to observe perfectly that which God requires of them. Otherwise they run the risk of losing themselves while seeking the good and salvation of others.

APPLICATION. If you be of this number, you must so let the gifts of God flow for the benefit of others as to keep many also for your own good. From time to time you must retire into yourself and think of your own soul and of its needs. For it will avail you nothing to gain the whole world if in this gain you lose your own soul. *For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?* (Matt. xvi, 26.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Serve ye the Lord with fear and rejoice unto him with trembling.* (Ps. ii, 11.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TAKING UP THE CROSS

And he said to all : If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. (Luke ix, 23.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ promulgated and addressed to all the faithful this great evangelical maxim of mortification and suffering : *And he said to all : If any man will come after me, let him deny*

himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. (Luke ix, 23.) Much more is this said, and in an especial manner, to all those who wish to lead a more holy and more perfect life, to be more intimate disciples and more faithful companions of Christ. For to be a true disciple and companion of our Lord consists not merely in listening to His doctrines, but it consists, as our divine Lord declares, in denying yourself and bearing the cross, and following Him, treading in His footsteps marked with blood even up to Calvary.

APPLICATION. This assuredly deserves your serious consideration. Observe furthermore what Christ says: *If any man will.* For He desires that you follow Him of your free will and spontaneously, as the invitation of so loving a Lord deserves, Who for love of you went so far as to die on the tree of the Cross. In your life then, as a follower of Him, you must certainly expect to suffer somewhat and to be mortified in many things. See then that you bear them willingly for love of your crucified lover, for this is what is pleasing to God. Notice that He does not say, *let him bear*, but *let him take up his cross*, to show you that if you wish to be truly a follower of His, you must embrace your cross with alacrity and promptness. Do not wait until it be placed on your shoulder like the Cyrenean, nor must you drag it along as it were by compulsion. Blessed are you if you carry it gladly; you will merit more and you will suffer less.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would surely have given it.* (Ps. l, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the readily embracing and carrying of the cross is not a work for you for certain days only and certain times, but for all days and for

all times. *Let him take up his cross daily.* By the word cross is to be understood any misfortune, tribulation or affliction that may come upon you. Now these crosses abound everywhere, whether in internal afflictions of soul or external ones of the body.

APPLICATION. Such then is the cross that you must willingly and even cheerfully embrace in all occurrences of life. *Let him take up his cross daily.* If you do this, what a great treasure you will also gain both of merit and of glory!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thine ordinances I will never forget, for by them thou hast given me life.* (Ps. cxviii, 93.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that nothing so much hinders you in carrying your cross willingly, and under all circumstances, as your self love. Consequently Christ asks in the first place for the total abnegation of yourself. *Let him deny himself.* Have you understood what it means to deny yourself? It means that you must contradict all the inclinations and ill-regulated desires of your lower nature. Regard then and treat it as an enemy, because you have many times discovered it to be a traitor. You will never uproot entirely these perverse inclinations of yours. Consequently Christ bids you deny them: *Let him deny himself*, which means that you must not let them gain the mastery over you.

APPLICATION. *Let not sin*, that is concupiscence, so the Apostle tells us, *reign in your mortal body, so that you obey the lusts thereof.* (Rom. vi, 12.) Follow this counsel and your cross will become light to you. You will embrace it gladly, following therein the footsteps of Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In thee, O Lord,*

have I hoped ; let me never be confounded : deliver me in thy justice. (Ps. xxx, 2.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ADVANCEMENT IN GOD'S SERVICE

I must work the works of him that sent me whilst it is day. (John ix, 4.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the meaning of those words of Ecclesiasticus : *When a man hath done then shall he begin.* (Ecclus. xviii, 6.) It is that in your spiritual life you must always act as if you were a beginner, and with the same fervour with which you began seriously to serve God. Hold steadfastly to those eternal maxims that you saw to be the foundations of your religious edifice, and it will come to pass that you advance in virtue, day by day, but always along the path by which you began.

APPLICATION. Never imagine, as some do, that you have become sinless, as it were, or that you have advanced sufficiently along the path of perfection. Be always on your guard against sin. Cultivate a holy fear of God and neglect not the practice of penance. If you fail in this, you will begin in advanced years to commit faults and sins which you did not in your youth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath commanded his covenant for ever ; holy and terrible is his name.* (Ps. cx, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another meaning, which is, that having finished one work in the service of God you must at once begin with another. Lose not a moment of time in idleness. Would you always be healthy in soul as well as body ? Be then continu-

ally occupied, for idleness is the root of all evil. Bear ever in mind that you must render a strict account to God of the time that you waste, and have wasted. At your death you will know it well. For seeing time coming to an end for you, you will perceive then how much good you might have done during the days of your life.

APPLICATION. Say to your own soul the words of Ecclesiasticus, *Son, observe the time.* (Ecclus. iv, 23.) Pass from one good work to another ; from prayer to labour, from mental fatigue to that of the body. Lose no time in useless chatter or unnecessary repose.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will bless the Lord at all times ; his praise shall be always in my mouth.* (Ps. xxxiii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY a third meaning, namely that when you are much advanced in spiritual things, then you will perceive that you are only at the beginning. Perhaps you now appear to yourself to have attained perfection. This is because you are merely a beginner. When you have attained any degree of it, you will then realise that you are not what you now imagine yourself to be. He who travels over a mountain, the more he climbs, sees the more how far he is from the summit, which at the beginning he thought he could reach with a few steps.

APPLICATION. So it will be with you. The more you rise towards perfection, the more you will see how far off you are from real mortification and true abnegation of self ; how far from true humility and obedience ; from true resignation and conformity to the divine will. Then will you say with David : *Now I have begun* (Ps. lxxvi, 11), and this will be the

best sign for you that you have made progress in the way of perfection.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Now have I begun : this change is of the right hand of the Most High.* (Ps. lxxvi, 11.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OUR PURCHASE BY CHRIST

The Son of man is come . . . to give his life a redemption for many. (Matt. xx, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how true it is that you do not belong to yourself ; for our Lord has bought and redeemed you at a great price, the price of His precious blood. Consider then how you wrong Him, when you wish to dispose of yourself only as you yourself desire. Your very eyes are not yours, nor your ears, nor your tongue, and so on with all that constitutes you yourself. For you wholly belong to that Lord Who has bought you.

APPLICATION. What doubt then can there be that you should never dispose of yourself in the least, except in homage to Him and His service to Whom you by purchase and right belong ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof ; the world and all they that dwell therein.* (Ps. xxiii, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the benefit our Lord did you in redeeming, in buying you back. Had He perhaps some need of you ? Was He not supremely happy in Himself without you ? It was then only for your good that He bought you back from the slavery of Satan. To do this, it would have sufficed to have given a single drop of His own blood, but He willed

to give it all, and to sacrifice His life itself amid terrible sufferings.

APPLICATION. Were you to see any one who could buy a jewel for a thousand crowns, and yet preferred to give ten thousand, would you not at once conclude what a great desire he had to possess that jewel? Greater without doubt is the longing, which our Blessed Saviour has, to deliver you for your own good from the hands of the devil Lucifer. Do you not wish then to be His, since He has redeemed you with so much love, and at so great a cost?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have said to the Lord: Thou art my God, for thou hast no need of my goods.* (Ps. xv, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how best to correspond to this excess of love of your Lord and Saviour. Employ and spend your whole self in His honour, without thinking of your own interest in any detail. When you have to use the senses or members of your body for God, ask of them to whom do they belong. Say too the same to your eyes and to your ears, when it is needful to mortify them for God; the same also to your tongue and to all your interior faculties and feelings, reminding them that they are not their own masters: *You are not your own; you are bought with a great price.* (1 Cor. vi, 19, 20.)

APPLICATION. For this same reason you are still more bound to keep your soul from all dangers, for it belongs to Jesus. You are commonly told to strive to save your soul, because it is your own and it belongs to you. *Keep therefore your souls carefully.* (Deut. iv, 15.) And so it is; but also strive to save your soul, because in fact it is not really yours, but belongs to Jesus, Who bought it back for Himself. This too

is the most noble motive you can possibly have to save your soul from hell.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bring to the Lord glory and honour; bring to the Lord glory to his name.* (Ps. xxviii, 2.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TRUE BLESSEDNESS

If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them. (John xiii, 17.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the teaching of worldly people which places happiness in riches, in pleasures, in honours, is the teaching of a false wisdom. Of such St. James speaks: *This is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish.* (James iii, 15.) That wisdom which places happiness in earthly riches is earthly, because it has for its aim earthly things. That which places happiness in pleasures is sensual, because it has for its end the things of the body. That which places happiness in honours is devilish, because it has for its end that which was the aim of Lucifer, the *King over all the children of pride.* (Job xli, 25.)

APPLICATION. Conclude therefore that such cannot then be true wisdom. For true wisdom is that alone which knows our last end which is God, and orders all things in consequence according to the rules laid down by that same God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They have called the people happy that hath these things; but happy is the people whose God is the Lord.* (Ps. cxliii, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how all these three kinds of wisdom are mere deceit and lying. Earthly wisdom

falsely promises to give happiness through riches, which in themselves profit not as an end, but only as a means, and that a very uncertain means too. Indeed it often happens, as Scripture says, that *riches are kept to the hurt of the owner.* (Eccles. v, 12.) Sensual wisdom promises happiness by means of the pleasures of the body, and not of the spirit, which is the nobler part of man, and, as it were, seeks to please the servant and not the master. The devilish wisdom promises happiness through honours, which do not constitute the excellence of man but only proclaim it. These are not therefore true signs, but often false, not like the honours that come from God Who honours him only who merits honour.

APPLICATION. Ponder well these important truths. Examine and see how you have been mistaken in the past. Make some few brief and practical resolutions.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To me thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable ; their principality is exceedingly strengthened.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the only true wisdom is Christ's, which leads man on to the pursuit of his proper end which is true happiness. And the more it detaches him from riches, from pleasures and from honours, so much the more it detaches him from all that keeps him back from his end, and makes him advance to it by the path of merit in this life and by reward in the next. Even in this present life it often brings a beginning of the reward, to be enjoyed by the devout persons as a foretaste of future blessedness. This true and sublime wisdom is learned only in the school of Christ. He brought it to us from Heaven, and taught it with His own lips saying : *Blessed are the poor in spirit.*

APPLICATION. Give therefore complete exclusion to the wisdom of the world, and apply yourself as diligently as you can in the school of Christ. Beseech Him constantly to make you wise with His divine wisdom, since He has in His mercy gathered you into the number of His intimate disciples.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls; the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones.* (Ps. xviii, 8.)

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LESSON OF HUMILITY

(Read Luke xiv, 1–11.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY this short maxim of true humility which Jesus gives you. *Sit down in the lowest place.* You must put yourself in the lowest place in your own heart and in your opinion of yourself, considering every one else better than yourself. That this may be less difficult to your pride, consider seriously your natural and moral imperfections, your ingratitude towards the divine goodness and your many sins, for which you have deserved to be trampled under the feet of Lucifer. This will lead you to say like David: *I will be little in my own eyes.* (2 Kings vi, 22.)

APPLICATION. Till now perhaps you have done the opposite. Closing your eyes to your imperfections, to your sins, to your pride, you look only at the defects of others. It is no wonder therefore that, instead of putting yourself in the last place in your own opinion, you so easily prefer yourself to others. Oh how many others there are, whom you consider your

inferiors, but who before God are much better than you and will be still more so in the next life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast regarded my humility: thou hast saved my soul out of distresses.* (Ps. xxx, 8.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you should put yourself *in the lowest place* exteriorly also. Procure for yourself as far as it is permitted you the lowest place in all things, and rejoice when by the will of others or by order of superiors you are placed there. Whenever you find yourself in a higher place, you should show great humility in your outward behaviour, manifesting the low opinion you have of yourself, and esteeming yourself below others in talents and in merit. You must let this low opinion of yourself be also evident in your words, by being as silent as possible in everything that might turn to your own praise. Praise others at all times. Be content to be reproved for your faults, but hide those of your neighbours as much as you can.

APPLICATION. Reflect carefully on your behaviour hitherto in this respect. You will find much to be ashamed of in your great pride.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou wilt save the humble people; but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud.* (Ps. xvii. 28.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY, by way of animating yourself to conquer your pride and to seek the lowest place, that the rules and standards of Christ are far different from those of the world. The world thinks most of him who exalts himself; Christ of him who humbles himself. By humility we now become more like unto Christ Who *humbled Himself*, in order that we may be more like Him in glory. *He that humbleth himself*

shall be exalted. Who are those who are most venerated and esteemed even by the world? Certainly not the proud nor the ambitious and arrogant, but the humble like St. Francis of Assisi, who in order to follow in the footsteps of Christ had espoused humility.

APPLICATION. What more monstrous than to see one, who even as a Christian professes to imitate the humility of Christ, in any way urged on by ambition, courting honours, sensitive on points of honour, preferring himself to others, praising himself and seeking the most honourable posts? Keep ever before you that teaching of Christ: *Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* (Ps. l, 19.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JUDGING OTHERS

Judge not, that you may not be judged. (Matt. vii, 1.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how unreasonable it is that you observe, criticise and condemn the little defects of your brethren. You have far greater ones in yourself to which you should attend, and yet you pay no heed to these. Before setting yourself to judge the defects of others think of your own: *Before judgment examine thyself.* (Ecclus. xviii. 20.) Do not seek to act the zealot. For Christ gave the most ignominious title of hypocrite to him who acts in this evil way. *Thou hypocrite, cast out the beam first out of thine own eye;* and with reason. For such a one wants to appear to be better than others, as hypo-

crites do, not because of his good works, alms, prayers or similar deeds, like the pharisee in the temple, but by arrogantly despising his neighbour, whom he ought indeed to think better than himself.

APPLICATION. See to yourself lest you deserve a like appellation by seeking to raise your own self by depreciating him who is better than you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O God, dost judge the people with justice, and directest the nations upon earth.* (Ps. lxvi, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in condemning the lesser faults of your brethren, even if this be done from motives of real zeal, you yourself do not derive any profit from it. For even supposing that you succeeded in clearing all the motes from the eyes of others, what good would that do to you if you still keep the beam in your own which will bring about your ruin? *Thou that teachest another teachest not thyself.* (Rom. ii, 21.)

APPLICATION. By showing your zeal for the slight defects of others, without attending to your own graver ones, they will only be scandalised to see that you want to make yourself superior and a judge in that in which you are yourself more guilty than they. If you would amend the defects of others with profit, correct them by a good example. Thus by reflecting upon yourself and by amending your own defects, you will lead others to amend theirs.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord.* (Ps. xviii, 13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in reproving the defects of others without correcting your own, you are doing not only what is useless and wrong, but also what is

most harmful to yourself. *For wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself.* (Rom. ii, 1.) You usurp an authority which has not been given you and which does not belong to you in any way. You provoke also the divine anger of God, Who has not appointed you to be judge over your neighbour.

APPLICATION. Think first then of freeing yourself from your own sins. Then you may lawfully admonish your brethren with charity of those defects, which of themselves perhaps they do not know or perceive.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *If in very deed you speak justice : judge right things, ye sons of men. For in your heart you work iniquity.* (Ps. lvii, 2–3.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

VALUE OF THE SOUL

What exchange shall a man give for his soul? (Matt. xvi, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what is the honour which holy writ tells us we owe to our own soul. *Keep thy soul in meekness and give it honour according to its desert.* (Ecclus. x, 31.) It is in the first place that you remember its indisputable right to command, being made to command as a queen, and not to obey like a servant the mere inclinations of your body. *The lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it.* (Gen. iv, 7.)

APPLICATION. Think therefore what wrong you do your soul by making it subservient to your flesh, or to any part of your lower nature. Do not act thus but keep for your soul its place of ruler.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Shall not my soul*

be subject to God? For from him is my salvation. (Ps. lxi, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another honour you should give to your soul. It is that you should prefer it, as it deserves, to everything of less value than itself, namely to all that perishes and is temporary. For all things temporal pass away and your soul is eternal.

APPLICATION. Hence you should prize it more than the empty friendship of men, more than reputation, more than the things of this life, more even than that bodily life which is so dear to you. *All that a man hath he will give for his life.* (Job ii, 4.) Alas! that there should be found so many in the world, who for a mere nothing do not fear to sell it to their mortal enemy!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let the poor seek and rejoice. Seek ye God and your soul shall live.* (Ps. lxviii, 33.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the third honour you should do your soul is that you not only treat it as a ruler, and prefer it to all the goods of earth, as it is your duty to do, but that you make it also to rejoice in God. This is the end for which it was created. You should not defer this honour to God until the next life, but give it to Him now as much as ever you can, by attending earnestly to prayer, by thinking of God, by speaking of God, by conversing with God, and by living in His divine presence. *We shall live in his sight.* (Osee vi, 3.)

APPLICATION. This third honour makes it more easy for you to give also the other two. He who converses much with God will not subject his soul as a slave to his senses. Still more does he despise all exterior things, nor will he esteem them as of

more value than his soul. By means of this interior recollection your soul will not go wandering abroad, but will remain within like a queen on her throne.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To him my soul shall live : and my seed shall serve him.* (Ps. xxi. 31.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CORRESPONDENCE WITH GRACE

If in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. (Matt. xi, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that as no ground can by itself produce a blade of grass without the benefit of rain, so no soul can of itself bring forth any fruit of virtue without the rain of divine grace. Strive to understand this truth well, and so to come utterly to distrust yourself. But grace does not suffice without your correspondence.

APPLICATION. Observe the difference there is between one piece of ground and another, both of which are watered in the same way, but which are not fruitful to the same degree. So two souls may receive equal graces from heaven without being equally grateful, and consequently one is blessed far above the other. To which of these classes do you belong ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I stretched forth my hand to thee : my soul is as earth without water unto thee.* (Ps. cxlii, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how much more frequently and liberally heaven has rained upon your soul, than it has on many souls that are left in circumstances

where there is a greater scarcity of spiritual helps. Reflect therefore and see how far you have corresponded. What fruit of good works have you produced considering the great help God has given you ?

APPLICATION. If you have produced some fruit, console yourself with the thought that God has blessed you by preparing your reward in heaven. But if instead of good works you have produced only *thorns and thistles* (Gen. iii, 18), your lesser sins figured by the thorns and the greater by the thistles, what is the meed of punishment you may then expect ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God : and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul.* (Ps. lxv, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the three maledictions uttered by Holy Scripture upon the unfruitful earth. (Heb. vi, 7–8.) The first is a reproof, because one of the most certain signs of a soul's being rejected by God is frequently to have received help from Him to do good, and all the same not to have made use of it. The second is the imminent danger of receiving the sentence of condemnation, for God does not usually suffer such ingratitude very long. The third is the chastisement of hell itself, because the fire and punishment will be in proportion to the sterility of the ground.

APPLICATION. Strive then to correspond with all the innumerable graces that God continually showers upon you. Thus you will be a ground pleasing in God's sight, and one which will be watered every day more and more by the favouring showers of His divine grace.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, thus shall*

the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. (Ps. cxxvii, 4.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TRUE SPIRITUAL SCIENCE

If thou didst know the gift of God! (John iv, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how many weary themselves in acquiring all the other gifts except those that are necessary. How many schools are everywhere opened and how many run to learn in them literature, science and art! But how few there are who hasten to the school of salvation, and set themselves to learn the holy fear of God! And yet in reality this is true wisdom, to know how to direct all our actions to the attainment of our last end which is everlasting happiness. For he who has not this may be perfected in the arts and sciences as much as he will, but it will avail nothing: *he shall be nothing regarded.* (Wisdom ix, 6.)

APPLICATION. And you who have been called to be a perfect follower of Christ, have you yet learned to value the holy fear of God above all other gifts?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath commanded his covenant for ever. Holy and terrible is his name: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* (Ps. cx, 9, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is not said absolutely that he who possesses the gifts of literature, of the sciences, and of the arts, is *nothing regarded*, but he who possesses them unaccompanied by the holy fear of God. For these gifts may be acquired with merit, and directed to the acquirement of the fear of God, and to His holy service. This then is the rule you must observe.

APPLICATION. Those arts and sciences, those employments and charges which help you to attain to the holy fear of God, to these you should apply all your efforts. You should leave aside those others which help you less thereunto, and which make it more difficult for you to obtain it. Examine yourself and make your resolve.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge.* (Ps. cxviii, 66.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it is clearly said that he, who is without this divine wisdom of the fear of God, is regarded as nothing, so that you may understand what is of value for heaven. All the valour of an Alexander, all the learning of an Aristotle, all the eloquence of a Cicero, and all the works of the greatest geniuses of the world—at what rate are these reckoned in heaven ? *It shall be regarded as nothing.* On the contrary the poor ignorant beggar, he who lives in the holy fear of God, is reckoned of greater worth in heaven than all these great ones put together.

APPLICATION. Do you believe this truth ? Why then not put it in practice ? Any small mortification or little rebuke that you bear for the love of God, an act of humility however small, or one of obedience or charity renders you in heaven of far more worth than if you were the wisest man on earth.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Establish thy word to thy servant in thy fear.* (Ps. cxviii, 38.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LIVING FOR GOD

Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. vi, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that great kings used to have in their armies certain squadrons, which had the distinctive name of the doomed infantry. They were dedicated to the service of their king in such a special way that they no longer looked upon their lives as their own, but were pledged to throw themselves for his sake wherever the fight was the thickest. Such a one assuredly was the Apostle St. Paul, who had no other end in his life but the service of his Lord, no other gain in his death than the glory of Christ.

APPLICATION. This too is what you should do in your life the more wholly it is dedicated to the service of Christ. You must be ready to live or die for Him. But in reality how do you act? You have not perhaps even the courage to live for God, by detaching yourself from those comforts that make you live for yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Mine enemies have reproached me whilst they say to me: Where is thy God?* (Ps. xli, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that those live for themselves and likewise die for themselves alone, who live according to their own humour and caprices, and even come to die from the disorders and the labours, to which they have submitted themselves from their ambition and self will. On the contrary those live to God, who are always completely submissive to His divine will and give themselves up entirely to promote

His divine glory. They use their tongues, their hands, all their senses and all their powers in the service of Christ, ready even to lose for Him that life which one day they must lose whether they will or not.

APPLICATION. Blessed then are you if you live and die for God. Do not be of the number of those miserable people who live and die for themselves alone.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God.* (Ps. xli, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that what most of all encouraged this heroic body of infantry not to regard their own lives, was to call to mind that they were not their own. They belonged to that monarch for whom they fought.

And this should also encourage us. Remember to whom we belong, and how many titles of right of dominion God has over us. *For you are bought with a great price.* (1 Cor. vi, 20.) What great marvel is it then, that we, vile slaves that we are, should live and die for Christ, when we know that Christ willed to spend His life and to die for us ?

APPLICATION. Employ your life then most willingly in His divine honour. Do not fear to lose it for Him. For the more you employ and spend this passing and mortal life for God, so much the more will you enjoy an incomparably better life hereafter.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul. In thee, O my God, I put my trust.* (Ps. xxiv, 1–2.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HOLY WISDOM

Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. (Matt. xi, 25.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that there is said to be the same difference between a wise and a holy man on the one hand, and a sinful and foolish man on the other, as there is between the sun and the moon. (Ecclus. xxvii, 12.) The sun is said to remain always unchanged, not indeed because it never moves, but because apparently it is always the same, and never loses anything of its light or strength. The moon on the contrary moves ; it waxes and it wanes ; it constantly is changing, is now full of light, now again dark. So likewise the holy man moves ; at the same time he is immovable. He moves because he is ever growing in virtue ; he is immovable for he allows not one degree of that virtue to escape him which he has gained, but rather increases it. The sinner on the contrary moves because he sometimes acquires virtue, but soon loses it again. If he begins to do a little good, he changes and soon repents of it.

APPLICATION. How far do you advance in virtue and stand firm in that which you have once acquired ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The most high hath sanctified his own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof, it shall not be moved.* (Ps. xlv, 5-6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the holy and wise man continues firm in the way of goodness, never altering that end, which he has placed before himself, of tending always to God. He gives himself now to prayer, now to study, now to the service of his neighbour, and now

to the duties to which obedience calls him. But he always continues firm in wisdom, by having in all he does the intention of always pleasing God more and more. He is like the sun which in all its regulated movements has for its ultimate aim the giving life to the world. The wise man does not fear, neither is he detained by the difficulties he encounters on the way. He constantly goes forward with his work towards the attainment of his end.

APPLICATION. Blessed are you if you know how to continue firm and unmoved in that one true wisdom, which is to direct and order all your actions to the one aim of pleasing God. By so doing you will attain to holiness of life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have kept thy commandments and thy testimonies : because all my ways are in thy sight.* (Ps. cxviii, 168.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the reason why the foolish man and the sinner is changeable like the moon is, because he has no settled rule in his life, nor does he keep his gaze fixed on his end. He is regulated by the opinions and by the bad example of others. He has not for his aim to please God but to conform himself to those about him. Thus acting according to the various maxims and examples that he meets with, like the moon he *never continueth in the same state.* (Job xiv. 2.) Much more so is this the case when every little difficulty encountered in doing good alarms him either from human respect, or from the repugnance of his corrupt nature.

APPLICATION. Oh how necessary it is that you should know well and understand for yourself what it is you have to do. Thus you will not be easily turned from it by others, but will courageously surmount the

obstacles which you encounter, and walk on direct to your end as indeed true wisdom requires of you!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee, O Lord, are my eyes: in thee have I put my trust.* (Ps. cxl, 8.)

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

(Read Matt. xxii, 35–46.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in order to fulfil the first and greatest precept of loving God, you must carefully consider these three things: how lovable God is in Himself, how loving He is towards you, and how truly lovable He is to you. There is nothing that so touches your heart, nothing that so moves you to love another, as the knowledge that he ever displays his love to you by his goodness towards you. God Who as the author of nature created you out of nothing, and Who preferred you before numberless others who would have been better than you, preserves you every moment, and by His omnipotence preserves also all the other creatures of this world for your use. As the author of grace He has redeemed you with His precious blood. He has granted you the gift of faith in Holy Baptism which has been denied to so many, and has called you ever nearer to Himself by means of so many special lights. Finally, as the Lord of glory, He is prepared to give you His kingdom, and to make you blessed with the gift of Himself.

APPLICATION. Do not then all these innumerable benefits suffice to unite your heart with Him, and move you to love Him? But true love is known by its works. It is like fire that cannot remain inactive,

Hence St. John says: *Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* (1 John iii, 18.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.* (Ps. xvii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how loving God is towards you. We should esteem His love more than His benefits, for His love is the very soul of His gifts. God has loved you, and that without any limit of time, without any necessity on His part, without any return on yours. Without any limit, because He began to love you from the beginning of eternity, and on His part desires to love you for all eternity to come. Without any necessity, for what need could he have had of you Who was always most completely happy and blessed in Himself? Without any return; for possibly He receives no daily return of love from you, but rather thousands of offences and base ingratitude, for which however He does not cease to love you.

APPLICATION. What man is there in this world who, seeing himself badly treated by one whom he loves, does not diminish his love or cease to love at all? Learn then once for all to serve God purely for love and for His glory, without regard to your own interest.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord lifteth up them that are cast down: the Lord loveth the just.* (Ps. cxlv, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how lovable God is in Himself for His infinite perfections and excellences. We are quickly drawn to love a man who possesses in himself some excellence of worth or of virtue. But how much more would you be drawn to love another if in his single person there were gathered all the most attractive virtues, all the most sublime gifts that are

to be found scattered among all who are in the world ? But God contains in Himself all the good and most perfect gifts that He has bestowed so abundantly on His creatures. Moreover He has in Himself all perfections, and these without number and infinitely more excellent than those to be found in creatures.

APPLICATION. How is it then that you do not love God for what He is in Himself ? How is it that you will not love in Him, and for Him, all that is good and perfect in His creatures, since He is the original source of all their good ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord our Lord : how admirable is thy name in the whole earth ! For thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens.* (Ps. viii. 2.)

MONDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. (Matt. xxv, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the virtue which is prized above all others in a servant is fidelity. *If thou have a faithful servant let him be to thee as thy own soul.* (Ecclus. xxxiii. 31.) You are the servant of God and His servant in every sense of the word. It is no wonder then that, even with great promises, He invites you to be always faithful to Him. But what is meant by being His faithful servant ? It means that you always esteem the interests of God more than your own. Hence where there is a question of pleasing God, you take no account, for instance, of your health, of your reputation, or of life itself. He is a faithful servant who thinks more of his master than of himself.

APPLICATION. Does it seem to you that you possess

such fidelity as this ? It is necessary that you should if you would obtain the promised crown : *Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life.* (Apoc. ii, 10.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, for I am thy servant : I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.* (Ps. cxv, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is not enough to show this fidelity for a short time. It must be continued until the end, *until death*, because it is perseverance that proves the reality of fidelity. Some care only to die well, but not to live well. Do not act so. Be faithful to God during all your life, *until death*. Hence if He sends you a sickness or some other affliction that lasts till death, be still faithful to Him in spite of everything. Fidelity is proved particularly in adverse circumstances, and therefore when it stands the test it is crowned.

APPLICATION. Consider how your fidelity stands the little troubles you encounter. If you bear these well, you may hope to be able to stand well also in greater trials.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Uphold thy servant unto good.* (Ps. cxviii, 122.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it alarms you to think of being faithful *unto death*, because you imagine that you have still a long time to live. Perhaps death is already nearer to you than you think, and indeed if you would that your life should appear very short, then think of the reward of eternity : *I will give thee the crown of life.*

APPLICATION. A crown of life that endures for ever and shall never end, a blessed life where joy shall be eternal ! Is not this enough to take away your

fear of the little you have to suffer in order to be faithful to God in this world? We should even grieve that the time appointed for suffering is so short, for suffering merits a joy which is to be eternal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes were upon the faithful of the earth, that they may sit with me.* (Ps. c, 6.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONFESSING CHRIST

Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the son of man also confess before the Angels of God. (Luke xii, 8.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what a supreme honour our Lord here promises you. He promises to confess you before all the angels who will be around His throne at the day of judgment, because you have faithfully confessed Him before men. He declares that He will glory in you before so many sublime spirits, and acknowledge you worthy to have a place among their magnificent thrones as a true subject of His, a true follower and a true soldier.

APPLICATION. Can you imagine any honour in this world equal to this? You think it much if a sovereign or a prince esteems and praises you before the members of his court. How then ought you to esteem it that God Himself should honour and praise you in the presence of the choirs of angels? Think often of this immense glory and honour. Thus you will not make any account of the honour of men in this life

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To me thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 17.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in order to merit this honour it is necessary for you to confess Jesus Christ now. This confession must be made not only with the heart but in word and in act : *In thy mouth and in thy heart that thou mayest do it.* (Deut. xxx, 14.) For if you confess Him only with your heart, and do not confess Him otherwise, you do Him little honour. Therefore He says to you : *Whosoever shall confess me before men.* Thus you may understand that putting away all human respect you have to glorify, confess, and honour Jesus Christ, not only within the walls of your own room, but in whatever public place you may happen to be. Jesus will then confess you in the presence of all His angels, *before His angels.* This you should do not only from the pulpit if you are a preacher but by taking occasion in familiar talk to exalt His holy doctrine, His maxims and His virtues. Thus will you move others also to honour Him.

APPLICATION. Is it not a deplorable thing, we may ask ourselves, that from the mouth of a follower of Jesus Christ no other conversation should be heard but the language of the world in praise of its pomp, its grandeur and its goods ? So little care is shown for the things of heaven and the glory of God !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart : and I will glorify thy name for ever.* (Ps. lxxxv, 12.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that for this true, genuine, confession of Him which Jesus expects of you, your heart and tongue are not enough. He moreover requires your actions also. Thus openly and publicly you may show by your life that you live as a true follower of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION. But what honour do you give Him if you are ashamed to profess, before the face of men, that humility and patience, that meekness and modesty, that He has taught you by His example? You rather bring dishonour upon Him, and are a cause of confusion to Him. Therefore your own dishonour and confusion will be the greater at the day of the last judgment.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In God shall we glory all the day long: and in thy name we will give praise for ever.* (Ps. xliii, 9.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

STRENGTH IN GOD

Without me you can do nothing. (John xv, 5.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the magnificent courage which the Apostle showed when he said: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.* (Phil. iv, 13.) He spoke of himself as almost omnipotent: *I can do all things*, not indeed in his own strength, but in that of God, Who alone could render him such. This was not pride in him but courage. For humility does not consist in believing that we can do nothing for God, but in believing that we cannot do anything of ourselves, as of our own strength.

APPLICATION. It sometimes seems to you impossible to conquer your own defects, to perform some duty, to continue in a certain place or office because you look only at yourself. Lift up your eyes and look on God. Believe that you have only to act in the strength of Him Who wishes to make use of you, weak and incapable as you are, to show that He is the author of the work that He lays on you. Then you will

be humble and will be at the same time courageous.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my strength and my refuge : and for thy name's sake thou wilt lead me and nourish me.* (Ps. xxx, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the aim of the Apostle in saying : *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.* He would show that he was really able to do everything not by virtue of his natural forces, but in virtue of Him Who infused into him supernatural strength.

APPLICATION. That which should give you courage to do great things, is the thought that you have to do them in the strength of God. *But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.* (2 Tim. iv, 17.) So it was that St. Paul wrote to Timothy. Hence you may understand that the strength of grace is given us, that we may co-operate with our free-will in work which we cannot really attribute to ourselves.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, who is like to thee? Who delivereth the poor from the hand of them that are stronger than he?* (Ps. xxxiv, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY of what things the Apostle speaks when he says, *I can do all things.* He means to speak of the difficulties of poverty, and of sufferings which of themselves would be insupportable to our natural strength. By reason however of the divine strength, though he ceased not to suffer, he suffered courageously.

APPLICATION. Do you likewise trust to God and put no obstacles in the way of receiving the grace which He has at hand to strengthen you. By thus acting you will not lose heart in the midst of your gravest difficulties and afflictions. You will say with the Apostle : *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord.* (Ps. xxx, 25.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONFORMITY TO THE DIVINE WILL

My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, that I may perfect his work. (John iv, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the real sign by which you may know that you love God faithfully, is that you conform yourself in all things to His most holy will. *They that are faithful in love shall rest in him*, says the Wise Man. (Wisd. iii, 9.) It is easy for you to love Him, when He makes you *rest in Him*, by giving you much peace and spiritual consolation ; but you must also continue to love Him when He chooses to treat you as He wills and *to rest in Him*, in infirmity, in dishonour, in aridity, and in desolation.

APPLICATION. And yet it is His will that you should not lack suffering. You in fact ask Him this when you say : *Thy will be done*, for the will of God is that you should become holy : *This is the will of God, your sanctification.* (1 Thess. iv, 3.) Now no one will ever become holy by any other way than by the path of suffering : *All that have pleased God, passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful.* (Judith viii, 23.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Set me, O Lord, a law in thy way, and guide me in the right path.* (Ps. xxvi, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this conformity, in order to be perfect, must be peaceful and tranquil. For though the inferior part of your soul may not always remain calm in the midst of afflictions, yet the superior part

should be always tranquil. You should calm your will, and you should calm your intellect. Many people calm their will easily, but not their intellect, since it seems strange to them that God should treat them in the manner He does.

APPLICATION. Let us then study to convince ourselves that an infirmity, the persecutions of malevolent people, or a disposition of circumstances which stops us from doing so many good works with much fruit to our neighbours, is the very best thing for us. If you have not reached this stage you are not completely tranquil and calm, nor are you faithful *in love*.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Much peace have they that love thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 165.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this complete conformity to the divine will is that which, more than anything else, gives peace to your soul. For that reason also conformity is synonymous with tranquillity. As long as you try to force the will of God, or that of him who governs you in His place, you will never be at rest. You will always be disquieted by fears, by anxieties, by remorse of conscience. You will only be tranquil, when you let our Lord, or him who governs you in His place, dispose of your will with the full submission of your intellect.

APPLICATION. Give then to God or to His representative the entire disposal of yourself according to that saying of Job (xxii, 21) : *Submit yourself then to him and be at peace.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn, O my soul, into thy rest : for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee. I will please the Lord in the land of the living.* (Ps. cxiv, 7–9.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WATERS FROM THE SAVIOUR'S FOUNTAINS

Thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him and he would have given thee living water. (John iv, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how great must have been the joy of the Israelites when, after long journeying through the desert in the greatest want of water, they at last reached the wells of Elim. Here each one could draw for himself as much as he pleased. But what are these fountains compared to those of Calvary? Here Jesus ceaselessly pours out for you rivers of grace from His wounds. From these fountains you can draw all that you need for your comfort and strength in the desert of this wretched world.

APPLICATION. Divine grace is often called by the name of water in the holy Scriptures, to teach us that as water has the three beneficent qualities of cleansing, of making fruitful, and of allaying thirst, so grace has the selfsame qualities. Strive to know them well. Then you may the more joyfully draw from these fountains of the Saviour.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.* (Ps. xxii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the waters of grace first cleanse away the stains, not indeed of the body but of the soul, by reinvigorating it and giving it a beauty that renders it lovable in God's sight. Secondly, it renders the soul fruitful, by making it rich in good works and more productive than a well-watered garden, and makes it capable of bearing fruits that are divine. The third beneficent property of this water

that flows from the wounds of Jesus, is that it extinguishes the evil thirst that is the result of spiritual infirmity or languor, and at the same time produces a holy thirst that is born of spiritual health.

APPLICATION. Reflect how the water of divine grace quenches the evil thirst, because it takes away all inordinate desires and all irregular inclinations, or at least so represses them that they no longer cause disquiet, or gravely molest the soul. *He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever.* (John iv, 13.) It makes the good thirst to increase, because it causes the will to long after the love and service of God, to rejoice in Him, and to be united to Him for ever. It is water that came down from Paradise, and to Paradise returns again: *A fountain of water springing up into life everlasting.* (John iv, 14.) What doubt then is there that you can draw this water with joy, and as much of it as ever you wish, from the fountains of the Saviour?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He brought forth water out of the rock: and made streams run down as rivers.* (Ps. lxxvii, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if you have not this water of grace abundantly, you have only yourself to blame, for the water of the fountain is free to all: *A fountain open to the house of David.* (Zach. xiii, 1.) To obtain it, you have only to ask it of Him and that with all your heart. You need not fear that He will refuse it to you. He thirsts more to give it to you than you to receive it, provided only that you are willing to ask it of Him.

APPLICATION. Resolve therefore to make your abode with Him; keep always with you Jesus crucified, call on Him, adore Him, for from Him you will derive

your every good. This is all reduced to the laying aside of evil and acquiring virtue, desiring nothing in this world but God alone. All this the waters of grace which gush forth from the wounds of the Saviour will give you. If you will have recourse to them with confidence and abide in them, *You shall draw waters with joy out of the saviour's fountains.* (Isa. xii, 3.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I stretched forth my hands to thee : my soul is as earth without water unto thee.* (Ps. cxlii, 6.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

NEGLECT IN GOD'S SERVICE

Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. (Matt. xxv, 21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the meaning of those words of the wise man, *He that feareth God neglecteth nothing.* (Eccles. vii, 19.) They mean that he who fears God regards no good deed whatever as superfluous. It is common to nearly all occasionally to neglect to do good, either from fragility or from human weakness. But to neglect to do good from mere carelessness, to be satisfied with doing just enough not to lose the grace of God, this is the negligence the wise man deprecates, and which characterises him who fears God but little.

APPLICATION. Let us always bear in mind that by thus acting we lose those abundant aids that God grants only to him, who is anxious and careful to please Him, and with the loss of these aids how many fail to persevere and so come to perish ! Let us also observe well that such negligence, although it does not amount

to grave sin, places us on the way to it and puts us in danger of it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Ye that fear the Lord, praise him : all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him.* (Ps. xxi, 24.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another meaning of these words, *He that feareth God neglecteth nothing*, namely, that He who fears God reckons nothing that is evil as a light matter. Even the very best sometimes commit sins, or at least some imperfections, for *in many things we all offend* (James iii, 2) ; but they do not make light of them, especially if they are in any way deliberate, but rather lament them deeply. He who is careless about little things will begin to count a sin as nothing because it is venial.

APPLICATION. Woe to you also if you are under such a delusion ! A venial sin is the greatest evil there can be in the world except a mortal one. So that to have in you one single venial sin is a worse evil for you than if you were attacked by all imaginable sicknesses. Consequently you cannot be justified in committing one single venial sin in order to escape all these ills. Neither would it be lawful for you to tell a lie, even if by so doing you could convert to the faith of Christ the whole nation of the Jews and all who rebel against Him. God also would inflict upon you a most severe punishment, namely that of purgatory, because by that one venial sin you dishonour and offend Him so exceedingly. And this being so, can you make small account of a venial sin ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In thy words I have hoped exceedingly. So shall I always keep thy law, for ever and ever.* (Ps. cxviii, 43–44.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that not to neglect any good

deed as superfluous, and not to despise any venial sin as a small thing, is not for the perfect only. It is the duty of all who possess the fear of God, and have their own salvation at heart. For it is certain that God, by reason of venial sins either of omission or of commission, often takes from a man those abundant helps which he requires for his salvation.

APPLICATION. Now consider the very grave importance of this matter for you! If you make no account of venial sins, and if you neglect to do any good that you are not bound to do under grave precept, fear lest God should abandon you and lest that be verified in you which has happened to so many others.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Such as turn aside unto deceits, the Lord shall number with the workers of iniquity.* (Ps. cxxiv, 5.)

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CURE OF THE PARALYTIC

(Read Matt. ix, 1–8.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how gladly our Blessed Lord beheld the faith of these good men. They could not bring the poor paralytic to His divine presence, owing to the crowd of people. They therefore let him down from the roof, that He might from very pity heal him. (Mark ii, 4.) At this sight Jesus lovingly addressed the sick man himself and bade him trust in the divine help: *Be of good heart, son.* (Matt. ix, 2.) From this you may gather that the help of others is beneficial to you, when they have recourse to Jesus with their prayers on your behalf. However it is likewise necessary that you should dispose yourself to obtain the graces of heaven, by your own acts

of trust and supplication. For God has promised to answer us in that which we ask for ourselves, and not in that which we ask for others, though in His goodness He often answers even our prayers for others: *Ask, and it shall be given you.* (Matt. vii, 7.)

APPLICATION. Why then are you so anxious that others should pray for you in your necessities, and yet little solicitous to approach our Lord and to pray for yourself? It is good indeed that others should pray for you and that you should pray for others. However it is even more important that, with confidence and fervent prayer, you should have recourse to our Lord on your own behalf.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee will I pray: O Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear my voice.* (Ps. v, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the paralytic desired only and asked only for his bodily health. But Jesus, Who wishes to give us very much more than we know how to ask for, gave him the health of his soul and of his body at the same time. He freed his soul from its sin, and his limbs from their malady. This, too, is what happens when you go to God in your needs and in your afflictions. You ask Him in your prayers to deliver you from some very troublesome temptation, from some anguish of soul, or from some infirmity of body. If your request is right and will be for the good of your salvation, He will give you more than you had thought of asking.

APPLICATION. Always then remember this, that God will not only hear you in what you desire of Him, but will make your soul more rich in merit and in virtue, by reason of the spiritual acts of humility and confidence that you make in praying to Him. You will often gain these other gifts, even when you

do not obtain that for which you asked. Is not this enough to make you turn promptly to God in prayer in all your needs?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord hath heard my supplication: the Lord hath received my prayer.* (Ps. vi, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus gave the paralytic first the health of his soul and then that of his body. Thus He wishes to show us that very often temporal chastisements and the ills of the body have their origin in the spiritual ills of the soul and in sin. Moreover He also teaches how much more important it is to be healed of the paralysis and infirmity of our soul.

APPLICATION. If by reason of your tepidity or remissness you feel the weight of your sickness you must have recourse to our Blessed Lord in order that you may feel the virtue of His voice and hear Him say to your heart: *Arise, take up thy bed.* Thus He will make you rise up generously from your evil habits, and recover your strength of soul. You will take up the bed of your flesh and your sensuality, wherein till now you have been lying, and will promptly do the bidding of reason and of the spirit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Say unto my soul, O Lord, I am thy salvation.* (Ps. xxxiv, 3.)

MONDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PRUDENCE WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Be ye therefore as wise as serpents and simple as doves. (Matt. x, 16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that although you are bidden to have absolute confidence in God, it is not meant in the least that you should neglect the pru-

dence which God has given you, but that you should not lean and depend on it alone. St. Peter says: *Be prudent therefore and watch in prayers.* (1 Peter iv, 7.) These two things then, prudence and recourse to God in prayer, should be united together in all your actions.

APPLICATION. If you guide yourself by prudence alone, you seem to think that you need not the assistance and the light of God. If on the contrary you call upon God, but in your actions do not make use of those means which prudence dictates, you would then be obliging God to work miracles for you. The rash and the over-prudent alike are displeasing to God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My mouth shall speak wisdom : and the meditation of my heart understanding.* (Ps. xlviii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the reason why you should not depend on your own prudence, but should confide in God, namely because your prudence may easily deceive you and because with it alone you cannot foresee and provide against all events. You must indeed make up your mind according to what prudence and right reason dictate to you. But then you must have recourse to God in prayer, and place all your confidence of a good issue in Him. Trust solely in Him and not in your own judgment : *Have confidence in God.* (Prov. iii, 5.)

APPLICATION. This confidence which the wise man here recommends to you, should be a hope which is firm and strong, and which leaves no place in your heart for fear of the contrary of that which you hope for. This removes from you that exaggerated solicitude and anxiety into which prudence by itself usually

degenerates. If you have confidence in God *with all your heart* (ibid.) He will always be ready to protect you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for my soul trusteth in thee.* (Ps. lvi, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, in order that God may protect you, He desires that you should often think of Him : *In all thy ways think on Him.* (Prov. iii, 6.) You should then renew in all your actions a right intention of pleasing Him alone, so that He alone may be the end and aim of all of them. If thus you act you have nothing to fear. He will direct all your steps and all your actions, so that they may be for you so many paths to lead you to heaven. Nor will it be difficult for you to maintain this right intention, if you always bear in mind that of yourself you can do nothing, and that at any moment, with all your own prudence, you would be lost if God did not give you His hand to direct and protect you.

APPLICATION. If you had to walk by night through strange streets and where you were in danger of falling at every step, you would have no difficulty in thinking at every single moment of the guide who is leading you So too must it be with you, when you once realise the great need you have of God in all your actions. All the good you may have done, and all the habits of virtue that you may have formed, do not in any way remove from you the need you have of His divine aid and assistance. You are like the little child who, because he has long been held closely by his mother, has not on that account the less need of still being clasped firmly by her.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the people*

that knoweth jubilation. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. (Ps. lxxxviii, 16.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REPENTANCE FOR SIN

I say to you that there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. (Luke xv, 7.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Lord says that there is greater rejoicing in heaven over the conversion of one sinner than over ninety-nine of the just. The reason is, because although the just are in general more estimable in God's sight, nevertheless the penitent gives more joy because he is a new acquisition, as it were, and this especially when his acquisition has been a difficult one and one almost despaired of. So it was that the father at the return of his prodigal son made an unusually great feast, for he had regained his son after so long an absence, that it seemed as if he had returned once more to life from the dead.

APPLICATION. From all this learn the immense love God has for you. You have been converted to Him, from a state of sin to the state of grace, Hence he rejoices at having once more regained you. And what other motive has He for rejoicing, if it be not that His heart tenderly loves you, and truly longs for your good? Would He not be equally blessed and happy without you? How is it that you are not moved to an intense love of God at this thought? You should therefore endeavour to secure your salvation, not only for your own good but much more in order to please God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed are they*

whose iniquities are forgiven : and whose sins are covered. (Ps. xxxi, 1.)

Consider secondly that in the conversion of the sinner the angels rejoice together with Christ, and make common festival with Him. They rejoice for three reasons in particular. First, as regards God, in seeing the glory which results to Him at the conversion of a sinner to repentance. Secondly, as regards men, because as they rejoice intensely in having mankind with them to partake of their own eternal happiness, so they greatly rejoice when they see one of them, who had lost his right to it, acquire it anew. Thirdly, as regards themselves, because as the angels help in the salvation of men, they rejoice above measure when they fulfil their office with entire fruit, and triumph over the enemies of our souls.

Application. Do you also learn from the angels to rejoice and be glad for the same three motives, whenever you see or hear of the conversion of sinners. These conversions you should rejoice over more than over that worldly prosperity of which others generally make so much account.

Affections and resolutions. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. I will teach the unjust thy ways : and the wicked shall be converted to thee.* (Ps. l. 14, 15.)

Consider thirdly that in this you should find a still stronger motive for striving, according to your means and your power, to obtain the conversion of sinners. For sinners are converted not only by means of sermons and missions, but also by good counsels, by good example, and above all by fervent prayers, accompanied by various kinds of little penances offered to God for this purpose. Hence it is that

many sinners, who are converted by hearing sermons, are in fact more the fruit of private prayers than of the words and efforts of the preacher.

APPLICATION Take then the counsel of the Holy Spirit: *Recover thy neighbour according to thy power.* (Ecclus. xxix, 26.) For thus you will have more merit before God and less motive for vainglory in yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.* (Ps. xcviii, 53.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DISTRUST IN SELF, TRUST IN GOD

Be not solicitous. . . . Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. (Matt. vi, 31–32.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that often various difficulties, dangers and grave troubles, that may come upon you, present themselves vividly before you, and in consequence your soul is afflicted and you lose heart, because you seem to yourself to lack sufficient strength and courage to overcome them. You must not however allow yourself to be affrighted by them. Your strength and your trust is not to be found in yourself but in God alone. Your enemy the tempter tries to represent them to you as vividly as possible, so as to make you despair and fall.

APPLICATION. Resist then the devil and have recourse to God. In this way will all the greatest difficulties, that alarm you, vanish from your mind like clouds of mist before the sun.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am needy and*

poor ; the Lord is careful for me. Thou art my helper and protector. (Ps. xxxix, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the diffidence you feel in yourself is really born of the profound knowledge you have of your own weakness, which rightly makes you afraid of yourself. Your confidence in God should also be born of the lively knowledge of His divine love, and of His divine help, in which you should hope far more than you distrust yourself. This diffidence of yourself is a much more sure means to obtain the help of God, than would be the thought that you are safe and secure. For God wills to confound the presumptuous.

APPLICATION. Thus it is that many who have had too great confidence in themselves, when they were confronted by difficulties, have shamefully yielded to sin. Others who feared stood firm; because being conscious of their own frailty, they sought the divine help by humbling themselves and praying with great fervour. You, knowing your own weakness, must put your trust entirely in the help of God. Do at the same time your part in order to merit it, because thus it will not be presumption, but true confidence.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Look thou upon me, and have mercy on me ; for I am alone and poor.* (Ps. xxiv, 16.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you should not cease to confide in God, even though at present you may not feel sensibly that vigour of spirit necessary to surmount certain difficulties, which make your weakness tremble. If God does not give to you strength at once, He will give it in time for you to be able to conquer in the combat. He gives His special aid

when there is need for it, not when there is no occasion for it, and so does not give it in vain.

APPLICATION. Bear in mind that when the trials come He will give you the strength which you now lack. *And the spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt be changed into another man.* (1 Kings x, 6.) It is said by the Apostle of those who trusted in God, that *they became valiant in battle.* (Heb. xi, 34.) For when engaged in using their strength for the honour of God, in that very moment they obtained still greater strength from Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is become a refuge for the poor : a helper in due time in tribulation.* (Ps. ix, 10.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MORE PERFECT PATH

Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. v, 48.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that as the commandments of God are called ways : *Shew, O Lord, thy ways to me* (Ps. xxiv, 4), so too the evangelical counsels are called paths : *Teach me thy paths* (ibid.) There are three reasons why the counsels are called paths. The first is because they are roads narrower than those of the commandments. They are narrow indeed at the beginning, but later on we can walk in them with ease. *Which when thou shalt have entered, thy steps shall not be straitened.* (Prov. iv, 12.)

APPLICATION. The affections of the soul are the steps which carry her to God. These spiritual steps are different from our material ones. The

latter end by slackening our pace; the former make us more vigorous by exercise. For this exercise is in fact a deep love of God, and he who loves much finds little or no difficulty in the observance of the counsels. He journeys most safely, ever loving virtue more and more. On the contrary, he who moves slowly and unwillingly in the service of God, easily stumbles and falls.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my paths.* (Ps. cxviii, 105.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another reason why they are called paths. It is because they are ways frequented by a lesser number. Who does not see that precisely because these ways are less frequented, one can walk with greater ease in them. There is not so much human respect, there are not so many distractions or so much bad example, all of which are often found where there is a great concourse.

APPLICATION. How safe and secure then is this more fervent mode of life. Thank God with your whole heart, if He has called you to walk in the more perfect paths of Christian piety and holiness of life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lead me into the path of thy commandments; for this same I have desired.* (Ps. cxviii, 35.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that these counsels of greater perfection are called paths because they afford the shortest and most direct course to heaven. Not that they make us die the sooner. It is not mortification that hastens death but excesses, sensuality and sin: *The sting of death is sin.* (1 Cor. xv, 56.) The counsels are the shorter, because they are the straighter, ways to heaven, which cause you to live

with greater perfection here, and make you stay less time in purgatory.

APPLICATION. Thus it is seen that in these narrower, shorter, and more solitary paths the words of Holy Writ are verified : *Thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest thou shalt not meet a stumbling-block.* (Prov. iv, 12.) See however that you become not weary of running, that you do not stop or turn back. For thus would you encounter many difficulties, and many risks, which, instead of serving you as so many helps to heaven, would rather serve as so many obstacles on your way : For *no man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.* (Luke ix, 62.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have run the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart.* (Ps. cxviii, 32.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. (John xv, 9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what a glorious example of the love of Jesus Christ we have in St. Paul. *Who then shall separate us*, he says, *from the love of Christ?* (Rom. viii, 35.) He could protest that all the evils he could possibly suffer could never separate him from the love of Christ or the happiness of serving Him, neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor persecutions, nor even death itself.

APPLICATION. Possibly one only of these evils suffices to remove you from the love of Jesus. Think then what must have been the love of St. Paul, who

could defy all these evils together to separate him from the love of Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will rejoice under the covert of thy wings. My soul hath cleaved unto thee: thy right hand hath upheld me.* (Ps. lxii, 8, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that sometimes in prayer you picture yourself thrown into chains by barbarians, and done to death in a public place. You feel a great longing to bear such sufferings for the love of Jesus, when they are far off and improbable. In time of prayer also you imagine you are ready to suffer misfortunes which might be likely to befall you, such as want of lodging, of food, of the conveniences and even the necessities of life. But when you are put to the proof you often give way at the first trial. If sometimes you rise superior to one, you are not able to bear up against all. If you resist sickness of body, you give way under trial of soul.

APPLICATION. See then how well rooted and strong was the love of Jesus in St. Paul. He not only despised so many evils together, but went to meet them all and overcame them: *In all these things we overcome.* (Ibid.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord thou hast proved me, and known me.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 1.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if, after the example of St. Paul, you really wish to overcome generously the trials that assault you daily, you can according to your state succeed in doing so. In order to achieve this, you only need to be filled with the love of Jesus Christ. It was precisely this that gave the Apostle so much strength to defy these evils and to conquer them all: *In all these things we overcome because of*

Him that hath loved us. (Ibid.) This means that victory came from the love he bore for Christ, and from the help that he himself received from Christ.

APPLICATION. If then you desire to experience this same love, and hope for this same aid, set yourself to consider how greatly our Lord has been pleased to love you, and to suffer for you. How many tribulations and afflictions, how much hunger and nakedness, how many persecutions and mortal wounds from the thorns, the nails, the lance, and the cross, did He not bear for the love of you! And if He loved you to such an excess, will you not likewise bring to Him an equal return of love? From Him you may rely on receiving every help, so that you may be able to say with the Apostle in all your afflictions: *In all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us.* (Ibid.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art good: and in thy goodness teach me thy justifications. The law of thy mouth is good to me, above thousands of gold and silver.* (Ps. cxviii, 68, 72.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WHETHER WORTHY OF LOVE OR HATRED?

When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants. (Luke xvii, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that every man who knows he is in grievous sin, can be certain that he is worthy of the hatred of God. Yet no man, however just he may be, can know for certain whether he be worthy of His love. He knows that he received sanctifying grace at his baptism, which cancelled original sin. He knows

that he receives it in the sacrament of penance which forgives actual sins. But he is not certain of having the dispositions necessary for the worthy reception of this sacrament. Neither can any one be sure whether he will have the grace of final perseverance. In a word, until we appear before the tribunal of Christ, we must always remain in this uncertainty of our salvation.

APPLICATION. You may rightly conclude then that, if in this uncertainty of your present and your future state you are not moved or do not tremble, it is a sign that you are walking in darkness.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who knoweth the power of thy anger, and for thy fear can number thy wrath? So make thy right hand known.* (Ps. lxxxix, 11, 12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this uncertainty as to your present and future state is exceedingly profitable for you. Were you certain of being now in the state of grace, you might easily become proud. Were you sure of a good end at last, you might easily neglect your present state. What fruit have not the saints gained from this uncertainty! It not only kept them continually most humble before God, in Whose hands they knew their destiny lay, but most humble also with regard to other men. For they judged all to be better than themselves, as regards both the present and the future state of their souls.

APPLICATION. Can you then dare unblushingly to think yourself better than so many others? And yet they are very likely even now in God's sight in a state of grace greater than your own, and may hereafter attain a higher degree of glory. Be at least then humble whilst your own state is still so uncertain.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this uncertainty is very much for your good. Were it indeed possible for you to have from heaven a certain foreknowledge of your future salvation, you ought not to desire to have it. Did you but know the great merit of trusting all to the mercy of your God, with great confidence saying to Him: *Behold God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently and will not fear* (Isa. xii, 2), then you also might imitate the confidence of a great servant of God, who said that if he held in his hand an authentic declaration which assured him of his predestination, he would at once tear it up, so as to depend completely on the infinite goodness of God.

APPLICATION. The testimony then of a good conscience which does not accuse you of grave sin ought to suffice you. Never cease to commend yourself to God, and beg Him never to permit you to lose His grace. Thus you may confidently hope for your salvation.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy.* (Ps. cxviii, 124.)

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MARRIAGE FEAST

(Read Matt. xxii, 2–14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that God invites all men to the supper, prepared for them, at the nuptials of the Word with the most Sacred Humanity. Those however are most especially called to the joyful participation in this supper who have cast away as far as possible

the impediments of worldly cares, and sit down at this table to partake most joyfully of the holy sacraments which God provides for them in His holy Church.

APPLICATION. God's great goodness and mercy to you are an act of His special grace, without any predisposition of merit on your part. How many, who are much better and more deserving than you, have not received such favours from God! Recognise His great goodness, and thank Him daily from your heart for His divine bounty.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He hath looked forth from his high sanctuary: from heaven the Lord hath looked upon the earth.* (Ps. ci, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the greater the goodness of God towards you, so much the less can He permit you to appear before Him without the wedding garment, that is to say, the garment of virtue proper to your state of life. Consider then seriously what is your conduct and behaviour. If they are not those that become a true servant of God, fear lest it be said to you: *Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?*

APPLICATION. Observe in the gospel how much more severely punished was he, who went into the supper without a wedding garment, than were those who rudely refused the invitation? So likewise will you be more severely punished if you live so tepidly and carelessly, while God is bestowing so many graces upon you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art a strong helper. Let my mouth be filled with praise, that I may sing thy glory: thy greatness all the day long.* (Ps. lxx, 7–8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that many are called to give God a higher and more generous service, but few are those who respond fully to the invitation and grace given to them. *Many are called but few are chosen.* (Matt. xx, 16.) Hence it belongs to every one now to co-operate with divine grace in the acquisition of habits of virtue, and in extirpating the vices of the old man.

APPLICATION. Now because this co-operation so needful is found in only too few, do not take example from those who live indifferent lives but from those who lead the more fervent ones. Remember that you will have no excuse before the tribunal of God for having let yourself be influenced by the majority, since you have heard the words: *Many are called but few are chosen.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have followed all the commandments: I have hated all wicked ways.* (Ps. cxviii, 128.)

MONDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DEATH IN THE LORD

He that believeth in me, the works that I do he also shall do. (John xiv, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY who are the happy ones *who die in the Lord.* (Apoc. xiv, 13.) They are those who, if they do not die *for* God like the martyrs, do at least die as the saintly confessors did, *in* the Lord. They die in a total abandonment of self; they die in the wounds of our Lord's blessed side, in His sacred heart, and in the embrace of His holy arms.

APPLICATION. What a blessed death this is! How it is to be longed for! But it is not enough to desire it; you must also merit it.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints.* (Ps. cxv, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this blessed death is not the portion even of all those who die in the state of grace, but it is that of those who have first died to themselves in order to live wholly to the Lord. What is it to die to oneself ? It is to detach oneself beforehand from everything that death will eventually take from us, such as our possessions, our relatives, our diversions, and above all from all irregular love of self ; in a word it is to live in the body as far as possible as if without a body.

APPLICATION. It is not enough to have begun ; you must continue to the end with constancy. Of what use will it be if, having once died to yourself in order to live to God, you afterwards turn back and live to yourself ? You seek once more your ease, your satisfaction in everything, and you give way to the disorderly inclinations of self-love. It is necessary that you be constant in remaining dead to yourself, until you come to die in the Lord.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him, and on them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their souls from death.* (Ps. xxxii, 18, 19.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that if this first death to self somewhat dismays you, you should console yourself by the thought of the second death, which follows it and by which you enter into eternal rest. *From henceforth now saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.* (Ibid.) Here notice that it is the Spirit of God Who urges you to suffer much for God, to labour, to overcome yourself, now, and then when death comes He will bid you rest. On the contrary

that spirit, that before death bids you cease from your labours and from mortification, is not the Spirit of God. It is the spirit of self, the spirit of the world and of evil.

APPLICATION. How then can you reasonably hope for such rest, without having accomplished faithfully your labours? See how much the saints toiled to obtain this rest, how much our Blessed Lord also laboured in order to merit it for you. But this labour of our Lord will not suffice for you without your own also; consequently He says: *That they may rest from their labours.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced: moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope.* (Ps. xv, 9.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. (John xviii, 37.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that our Blessed Lord often comes to call you with His voice, and to knock at the door of your heart, that you may open unto Him the entrance and admit Him into your house every time He makes you hear His inspirations or awakens in you remorse of conscience. He will not enter by force. He leaves you master of your own liberty, that you may have the merit of welcoming Him of your own free will.

APPLICATION. You who so often hear this call, and our Lord's knock at the door of your heart, are you attentive to His voice? Are you prompt in opening to Him? At His first call do you

hasten to the door of your heart, to hear with quiet and recollection the voice of your Lord? Do you not rather divert your mind so as not to hear Him? What wonder is it then that you do not open to Him and that He at last goes away?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hearken and consider and incline thine ear.* (Ps. xliv, 11.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, when Jesus Christ calls you, it is not enough that you should attentively listen to His inspirations. It is necessary that you open Him the entrance if you desire that He should enter your house. This opening consists in offering your will promptly to Him to do whatever He wishes you to do, and in asking His grace to fulfil it perfectly, saying with St. Augustine: *Give what you command and command what you will.*

APPLICATION. Although perhaps you have heard the voice of your Lord, yet, instead of promptly offering to Him your will you have allowed yourself to be dismayed by the difficulties which self-love alleges, and have not thought of the great blessings He brings with Him. Think then seriously Who it is Who thus comes to you, and why He comes, and then when He comes you will not delay to open to Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am thy servant: give me understanding.* (Ps. cxviii, 125.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that on the entrance of Christ into your heart a double repast is prepared, one by you for our Lord, the other by our Lord for you. *I will sup with him, and he with Me.* (Apoc. iii, 20.) The supper that you prepare for our Lord consists in the delight you give Him by the fruit of your good works, and by obeying His holy inspirations. That which our Blessed Lord prepares for you consists in

the spiritual consolations and the strength of grace, which He gives you just in proportion to the sumptuousness of the feast you have prepared for Him. After that He prepares for you a banquet that you will partake of not by the light of faith, but in the light of glory.

APPLICATION. Blessed indeed are you if you are admitted to sit at this glorious banquet! But you must first prepare yours for Him, by obeying His voice and by admitting Him into your heart. For if you are now deaf to His calls, how easily you may be excluded from His glory hereafter!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast multiplied thy magnificence: and turning to me thou hast comforted me.* (Ps. lxx, 21.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOD'S VIEW AND THAT OF MAN

That which is high to men is an abomination before God. (Luke xvi, 15.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY these words which came forth from the mouth of Incarnate Wisdom, in which He declares that all that which is *high to men*, such as high position, grandeur and honour, is accounted before God an abomination. Before men it is esteemed great to rule over others and that with ostentation and arrogance. It is accounted noble to flaunt and to squander wealth with vanity and pride. It is deemed a glory to humiliate a rival and to render life more miserable for one's enemy. And all this *which is high to men*, all, without any exception, *is an abomination before God.*

APPLICATION. You who belong to the school of

Christ, what think you or what do you understand by all this? Do you rule your conduct according to the judgment of men or of that of Jesus Christ? Do you make more account of talents than of virtue? Examine your thoughts and your aspirations and see to which side you tend.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am well pleased with thy truth. I have not sat with the council of vanity: neither will I go in with the doers of unjust things.* (Ps. xxv, 3, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY by whom the great and the good things of this world are prized, and by whom also they are counted an abomination. They are prized by some men, but not by all. Not indeed by those who are spiritual or rightly reasonable, but only by those men who rather are deceived themselves and who deceive others, who are rather guided by their lower and animal passions. On the contrary, see by whom these things are counted an abomination. It is by God Himself, as Christ Himself assures us.

APPLICATION. Can you then fall into so great an error as to prefer the esteem of men to the esteem of God? In His judgment, too, so many millions of the noblest specimens of our race accord, and all the whole court of paradise. If you esteem that to be high, which is an abomination before God, you show that you have rather studied in the school of the world than in that of Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity.* (Ps. cxviii, 37.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ came down from heaven in order to discredit the esteem in which so many, and even the greater part of mankind, held the high things of this world. He was born poor and

an outcast in a poor stable. He was obliged to flee to Egypt by night in order to escape the anger of Herod. He lived as an unknown workman in a poor carpenter's shop. He bore innumerable affronts and persecutions and insults from His own favoured people. Finally He gave Himself up, of His own free will, to the most opprobrious and infamous death of the cross.

APPLICATION. Do not such recollections of the life of Christ suffice to correct and to adjust the judgments of your mind, to make you abhor the pomp and vanity of the world and love humility? So Christ has taught you during the whole course of His life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity?* (Ps. iv, 3.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TEPIDITY

They upon the rock are they who when they hear receive the word with joy . . . they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away. (Luke viii, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that these words of our Blessed Lord may be considered as directed against those who, having begun to serve God with fervour, have afterwards given themselves up to a life at least of tepidity. They seek their own ease, and avoid all mortification; they neglect their ordinary spiritual duties and they hesitate not to commit deliberate venial sins. *Thou hast left thy first charity.* (Apoc. ii, 4.) This tepidity is most hurtful, and that for

three reasons. The first regards the tepid person himself. He may be compared to a well cultivated tree, planted in excellent ground, which does not bring forth the fruit of good works. Where now is the fruit of so many past communions, so many prayers and the examples of so many fervent companions?

APPLICATION. Let us seriously think of the damage done to a soul by such tepidity, such neglect of religious duties, so many faults and sins. Who can reckon the sum of them? Such a one lives now in very truth an unhappy life, feeling a repugnance and great weariness for the religious practices of former days, and ever chafing at being deprived of many worldly consolations which vainly he would wish to have. If you could see the interior of two souls, one fervent and mortified, and the other relaxed and tepid, how much would you envy the one and pity the other!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *All have gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good.* (Ps. lii, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this tepidity harms also one's neighbour. Every one is bound to benefit, and do good to, his neighbour, as he can do by prayer, by good conversation and especially by good example. But the tepid man helps not by his prayers, for he makes few or none, or at least he makes them carelessly; and he even does positive harm by his bad example.

APPLICATION. Every tepid person may be regarded then as a sterile tree and a poisonous one too, or as a two-edged sword that wounds both himself and his neighbour at the same time. How many accusers

such a one will find at the tribunal of God, Who will demand a strict account of him there!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? He that speaketh truth in his heart.* (Ps. xiv, 1–3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, with regard to God, a tepid person deprives Him of that glory and of that special honour, which He had a right to receive from His creature. By his ingratitude such a one restrains the divine beneficence from bestowing on him those greater gifts, which He desires to give him. Finally he provokes the divine justice to abandon him, and to deprive him of those more powerful helps he requires to obtain final perseverance.

APPLICATION. Consider then that there are many who, by allowing themselves little by little to become relaxed and tepid, have fallen into the most dreadful sins and have made a most unhappy end! The worst is that, while many have been raised from the coldness of an ill-regulated life to heights of great sanctity, seldom on the contrary has a tepid soul been known to return to its first fervour. For such do not deserve that God should show them mercy, by reason of their immense ingratitude.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *There the workers of iniquity are fallen: they are cast out, and could not stand.* (Ps. xxxv, 13.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CHRIST DRAWS ALL TO HIMSELF

Now is the judgment of the world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. (John xii, 31, 32.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ in these words points out two most happy effects that His death was to gain. The first, that He would despoil the devil of that ascendancy over the human race which he had acquired ; the other, that He Himself should be invested with that ascendancy and dominion, and this for having, by the merit of His death on the cross, satisfied the debt of our sins. For it was these same sins which had placed us under the slavery of the devil.

APPLICATION. Hence it follows that all those who remain under the power of the devil do so, not because the devil has over them the power that he would have had if Christ had not died for them, but because in their blindness and folly they wish to remain there. Thus they become more vile even than those slaves are, who willingly remain in slavery. Do we not deplore such disastrous and universal folly on the part of so many unbelievers, and of so many bad Catholics ? What, then, if we also enter their ranks and increase their numbers ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The ways of sinners the Lord will destroy.* (Ps. cxlv, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Jesus is now invested with that dominion, which the devil had before held over mankind, for He has rescued them from slavery through

His death. Hence He says with reason that He will draw all men to Himself: *I will draw all things to myself.* For all belong to Him, all are His subjects, the saint and the sinner, the devout and indevout, the good and the bad.

APPLICATION. On the day of judgment, *we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ* (Rom. xiv, 10), the good that they may be made partakers of His kingdom, the bad that they may be condemned for their unfaithfulness, and sentenced to eternal punishment. Enter then seriously into yourself and remember that you also will have to place yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ one day, either as His faithful follower, or as His guilty enemy. Choose now that which will be the best for you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O hear my prayer: all flesh shall come to thee.* (Ps. lxiv, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY in what way and by what means our crucified Lord draws His followers to Him, in order to make them partakers of His kingdom. He draws us by gentle force of persuasion, of benefits, of sympathy. By force of persuasion, by His heavenly doctrines and much more by His example. He goes so far as even to die naked and forsaken on the tree of the cross between two thieves. By force of His benefits, He has by His death liberated us from eternal death, and opened to us the gates of heaven. By force of sympathy, He has made Himself known to be truly man by suffering death, and truly God by triumphing over death. As man He draws us to Himself, by having for love of us become like unto us; as God He draws us more strongly as our one centre and as our last end.

APPLICATION. Are then all these three ways

of drawing not sufficient or convincing enough to draw you to Him, and to make you a faithful and a devoted companion of our crucified Lord ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hear, O Lord, the voice of my supplication : when I cry to thee, when I lift up my hands to thy holy temple. Draw me not away together with the wicked.* (Ps. xxvii, 2, 3.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PROOF OF LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST

If you love me keep my commandments. (John xiv, 15.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the love of Jesus must not be a love in appearance only, one that ends in words, in tenderness and in tears. It must be active, patient, and supreme. It must be active. From the beat of the pulse we judge of a person's health. From his actions we know his charity or love of God. The Son of God throughout the thirty-three years of His mortal life, which He spent for your sake, was not for a moment idle. All His labours were to work out your salvation.

APPLICATION. If then you profess to love Jesus, examine how far your actions are devoted to His service and to His glory. A fire that does not burn is not a real fire ; it is but an imaginary one. So it is with love. If it does not labour, it is not love. This is the real rule by which to know if you truly love Christ Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am poor, and in labours from my youth.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 16.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the love of Jesus must not only be active but it must also be patient. This is a most sure and certain sign of love. For patience,

as the word itself implies, means also suffering. If you are not willing to embrace and bear the cross for God, you cannot be said really to love Him. For that, which seems to you an impulse of grace and an act of love, may be perhaps only an impulse of nature and the effect of self-love.

APPLICATION. The cross then is the only true touch-stone to discern the true love from the false, the earthly from the heavenly. For, by patience and suffering, you must go against your self-love and the inclinations of corrupt nature. The gold which does not stand the test of the fire is false gold and worthless.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art my patience, O Lord: my hope, O Lord, from my youth.* (Ps. lxx, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the love of Jesus must be supreme, and always triumphant. Fire vanquishes all by overcoming all, devouring all, turning all into fire. So the love of Jesus should in your heart overcome, vanquish, and rule all other affections. If then the love of God should come into competition with the love of any created good, the love of God should always prevail, and should have the first place in your heart. And in truth the love of God should not only have always the first place in your heart, but the only place. For it should destroy in your heart every other affection, as the fire overcomes everything else and destroys it.

APPLICATION. Jesus then is the only good that will not fail you in life or in death, and Whom after death you shall enjoy to the full. Turn your eyes on all creatures; you will not find one that merits to be loved outside Jesus, or to compare with Jesus. If His love for you triumphed in His heart over every

other affection, why does not love for Him do as much in your heart?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, I will be mindful of thy justice alone.* (Ps. lxx, 16.)

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE RULER'S SON

(Read John iv, 46–53.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY why Jesus had previously acceded to the Centurion's request to go to his house and heal his servant who was grievously ill, and now delayed, when besought by a ruler to go to his mansion in order to heal his own dying son. St. Gregory says that the reason was to confound our pride. For this vice makes men run quickly when called to serve an illustrious person, but moves them not to help the poor and neglected, who are so much dearer to God.

APPLICATION. Such distinctions are contrary to all true charity. We should see in our neighbour the work and the image of God, and not regard the mere exterior value of honours and riches. *There is no respect of persons* (Rom. ii, 11) with those who, in serving their neighbours, wish only to serve God for God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is in his holy temple: the Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes look on the poor man: his eyelids try the sons of men. The Lord trieth the just and the wicked.* (Ps. x, 5–6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY another reason why our Lord would not go to the ruler's house. It was to correct the imperfection of his faith. He thought that

Jesus was indeed a great prophet chosen of God to work great miracles, but he did not believe Him to be at the same time God Who was present everywhere. Hence he deemed that His bodily presence was necessary in order to bring back health to his dying son.

APPLICATION. Behold one of the principal obstacles and reasons why your prayers also are not answered, namely, the weakness and imperfection of your faith. Faith is the first step by which man approaches God. It is also the first thing that is needed in order to obtain grace. Strive in your prayer to re-animate and purify your faith, so that it may become real confidence as well, by begging it of our Lord : *Lord, help thou my unbelief.* (Mark ix, 23.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They believed his words : and they sang his praises.* (Ps. cv, 12.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Jesus at the beginning repulsed the ruler's request, so that, by more humble perseverance in asking the grace which he needed, he might merit it the more. Constancy in asking grace is so pleasing to God that, on account of it, He forgives all our defects in the manner of asking for it, and makes us obtain that which we do not deserve. For God was never known to repulse anyone who earnestly importuned Him in prayer, as we may gather from the words, *Although he will not arise and give it him because he is his friend ; yet because of his importunity he will give it.* (Luke xi, 8.)

APPLICATION. Learn therefore to importune God in your prayer humbly, earnestly and perseveringly. Then you will certainly obtain your petition, if it be for the good of your soul, or some greater blessing will be given you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, the God of my salvation: I have cried in the day and in the night, before thee.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 2.)

MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OBEDIENCE TO LAWFUL AUTHORITY

Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight. (Matt. xi, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in order to be truly obedient, it is not enough that you should perform what is ordered, because the thing is to your liking, or because you fear punishment, or hope for some advantage. You should do it because you are so commanded, conforming yourself to the will of your lawful superior not only in the action itself, but also in your own will. For true obedience consists in making your will one with that of him who commands.

APPLICATION. In order to do this, we should strive to persuade ourselves that our superior is right in what he orders. This does not prevent us from representing any difficulty we may find in the matter. However after having once represented it, we should not make any attempt to wrest and force the superior's will to our own.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art just, O Lord: and thy judgment is right.* (Ps. cxviii, 137.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Samuel says, in the Third Book of Kings, that rebellion against the judgments of superiors *is like the sin of witchcraft.* He who thus rebels, sets himself up to conjecture and to divine, and to make of himself a prophet and a diviner. Whereas if you conform yourself to the

judgment of your superior in all that is not sin, you are sure to please God and to do what is best. Your actions performed in obedience become products of a union of your human will with the divine will. But this may not be so if you follow your own judgment even when you perform actions otherwise praiseworthy, such as those of penance and devotion.

APPLICATION. May God grant that at your death He may not have to say to you as He did to the Hebrews: *Who required these things at your hands?* (Isa. i, 12.) How often do you neglect the certain good required by obedience, for the uncertain good of acting according to your own caprice! How often do you not make yourself a prophet and a diviner of what is best for you, and how often do you rebel against your superior!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne.* (Ps. xcvi, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how Samuel declares the refusal to obey to be *like the crime of idolatry.* (Ibid.) The reason is because he who disobeys, and is determined to go his own way, recognises his own will as the supreme lord of all his actions. This supreme dominion is to be attributed to God alone, Who as regards yourself has communicated it to your superiors: *He that heareth you heareth me.* (Luke x, 16.) Therefore to divert an attribute from him to whom God has given it in order to transfer it to your own will, is to make an idol of yourself. You set up one altar against another; you prefer your will to the divine will by making it your first rule of conduct.

APPLICATION. Consider therefore what a serious fault is opposition to the judgment of superiors,

due to the desire to follow your own. Still more serious is it for you to try and bend the will of him, who governs you in the place of God, to your own will. For thus he has to act the part of a subject rather than that of a superior.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Bless the Lord, all ye his angels: you that are mighty in strength, and execute his words, hearkening to the voice of his orders.* (Ps. cii, 20.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FIDELITY IN LITTLE THINGS

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little is unjust also in that which is greater. (Luke xvi, 10.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that one of the greatest deceptions in the spiritual life is to desire to do great things, which most probably will never be done, and to neglect meanwhile the little points of your duty in that place or office where God has put you. This longing to do great things, although it may be a sign of fervour, may sometimes do great harm to you. It will often distract your heart and your mind from that which you ought to be doing daily. Moreover, it may often fill you with pride, making you think yourself already rich in virtue.

APPLICATION. First accustom yourself to do the little things well, that so you may afterwards aspire to greater ones. For if you are faithful as far as lies in your power in little matters, you may hope that you will be faithful in the greater.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will bless the Lord*

at all times : his praise shall be always in my mouth. (Ps. xxxiii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how important and how meritorious is this fidelity in doing little things well. For as these are so frequent and so continuous, they are liable to be very tiresome to nature and very opposed to self-love. We find no food for vanity in them, and consequently we gain great merit from them. They form also in us a good habit of overcoming the repugnances of nature, whereas great occasions are very rare and we cannot acquire a habit by performing only a few acts. Moreover vainglory easily enters into the performance of great things.

APPLICATION. Strive then to put up with some sharp words, to overlook the bad treatment which you sometimes have to experience. Perform punctually and diligently all those lesser duties that your state requires of you, that so you may gain much profit thereby : *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater.* (Luke xvi, 10.) But if you are not faithful in the little things neither will you be in those that are great.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes were upon the faithful of the earth, to sit with me : the man that walked in the perfect way, he served me.* (Ps. c. 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that he, who does not value the smaller good, cannot hope to do well when greater opportunities arise. So too may he fear to fall into grievous sin, who is not careful not to fall into small sins. *He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater.* This fear of falling into grave sin is not so much for him, who occasionally falls almost involuntarily into venial sins through the weakness of corrupt nature, as for him, who

does not refrain from frequently and voluntarily committing venial sins, without any fear or remorse of conscience. For a bad habit such as this, joined to corrupt nature, makes it very easy to fall into mortal sin.

APPLICATION. Consequently, if you, with your eyes wide open, let yourself be habitually drawn into little sins such as ambition, sensuality, or avarice, you will easily and gradually become blinded, you will shortly pass on from little to great sins, from venial to mortal. *He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater.* It does not say *shall be*, but *is*, because grave sin, although in the future, is now really so near that our Lord speaks of it as actually present. Ah! should you fall into mortal sin, God grant that the fall may not then be also irreparable.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath longed greatly to desire thy justifications at all times.* (Ps. cxviii, 20.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONFESSING THAT WE ARE SINNERS

O God be merciful to me a sinner! I say to you this man went down into his house justified rather than the other. (Luke xviii, 14.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how much reason there is that you should have these words of the poor publican often in your mouth. Often you complain that God tries and afflicts you. It seems to you that He presses His hand too heavily upon you. Yet holy Job in far greater afflictions thus cried out: *I have sinned and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I deserved.* (Job xxxiii, 27.)

APPLICATION. Change then your attitude towards

our good God and say rather that, by these trials which He sends you, by these infirmities, by these humiliations, that seem so hard to your self-love, He only allows you to pay a very small part of what you owe the divine justice, to atone for your sins both of omission and commission.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before thee.* (Ps. l, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, in order to be able to say these words and really mean them, you must really believe them, and this you cannot do unless you strive to understand well and realise how ill you have behaved towards God in the past. How ungrateful you have often been for His goodness in preserving you amid the many perils of the world! How often you have failed to correspond to the obligations of your state of life! How backward and remiss you have been in the acquisition of virtue!

APPLICATION. After such reflection say sincerely then from your heart: *O God be merciful to me a sinner. I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved.* For what comparison is there between any adversity that God sends you now, and that punishment you have deserved in hell for all eternity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, be thou merciful to me. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.* (Ps. xl, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that each of the lost in hell can say the same words but does not indeed say them, for in hell there is no place for truth. Yet, however much they suffer, they are punished less than they have deserved for one single mortal sin! Consider then whether the trials, with which God afflicts you in this

life, are not much less than what you deserve for your many sins. And what are the sufferings of this life in comparison with those of the next life, which God so far has spared you ? They are like the picture of a painted fire as compared to a real one.

APPLICATION. Does it then seem to you too much to live here for a short time, in a little or even much humiliation, you who have deserved to remain for ever under the proud feet of Lucifer ? Does it seem to you too painful to be confined to a bed of suffering, you who perhaps should now be burning eternally in the fires of hell ? Does it seem to you to be a too unhappy life to be deprived of comforts and to be debarred from pleasures and amusements, you who, like the rich man of the Gospel, would not be able in that prison of fire to find a drop of water wherewith to cool your lips. Reflect on all this, and you will indeed find it easy to say : *I have sinned, and indeed I have offended*, and you will add, *and I have not received what I have deserved.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell.* (Ps. xciii, 17.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CASTING OUR EYES ON GOD

Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand. (Luke xxi, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that this world is indeed full of snares laid by the devil. In order not to fall into them you must walk with your eyes fixed, not upon the earth, but lifted up and fixed on God. Servants keep their eyes fixed on their master, and this

for three reasons, viz., in order to fulfil his orders, to follow him wherever he leads and to beg his help if they find themselves in necessity or his pardon if they have been in fault. In similar manner you also should keep your eyes and heart, constantly intent on God, so as to obey in all that He requires of you, at the least sign either from Himself or from His ministers.

APPLICATION. Perfect obedience to God and to His representatives, brings the happy privilege of walking in perfect safety where others might easily be lost. What account do you make of this happy privilege which you at all times have? *He that keepeth the commandments shall find no evil.* (Eccles. viii, 5.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My eyes are ever towards the Lord: for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare.* (Ps. xxiv, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that servants keep their eyes upon their master in order to follow and attend upon him. So must you do with God. But how can you do this perfectly if you do not keep your eyes turned to Him, thinking to yourself how His divine Son behaved in circumstances similar to yours when living upon earth? If in all your actions you look at the example left you by our Blessed Lord in order to imitate Him, you will be certain never to go wrong. *And whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them.* (Gal. vi, 16.)

APPLICATION. Why then do you not set yourself to meditate seriously on the actions of Christ as described in the holy Gospels? These are meant to serve you as a sure guide and rule of life, just as the navigator's chart serves to guide him safely and happily into port.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold as the eyes of the servants are on the hands of their masters; so*

are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until he have mercy on us. (Ps. cxxii, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that servants keep their eyes on their masters, either to seek their help or crave their pardon. So must you do with God. For your security from falling into the snares of your enemies will come, more than by anything else, from continually asking for help in your needs and for pardon for your faults. If you neglect to ask for this aid, you will not obey His divine will, nor will you conform yourself to the example of His divine Son.

APPLICATION. Confess yourself to be guilty, to be poor and in peril, to be therefore incapable of attaining by yourself the blessedness of heaven. Never tire then of keeping your eyes fixed on God and His divine Son. On Him depends all you may ever hope for of good both here and hereafter. Say then : *My eyes are ever towards the Lord.* (Ps. xxiv, 15.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I set the Lord always in my sight, for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved.* (Ps. xv, 8.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CHRIST DELIVERED HIMSELF FOR ME

Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John xv, 13.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what St. Paul says (Gal. ii, 20), *I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me and delivered himself for me.* To live in the faith of the Son of God means that you so trust in Jesus Christ, that you feel sure that, while you let yourself be ruled by Him, all will be well with you.

APPLICATION. Though God sends you suffering,

sickness, humiliation, desolation, yet you must always throw yourself completely into the arms of that same Lord, Who has so loved you and Who in the end will make all things work for your good. *I live in faith.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my light and my salvation: Whom shall I fear? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear.* (Ps. xxvi, 1–3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY to what an extent Jesus Christ has loved you since *He delivered Himself for you.* He Himself willed to be in person the one great victim offered for your salvation. He was betrayed by Judas and given into the hands of His enemies because *He delivered Himself.* And all this He did lovingly for you. *He loved me and delivered himself for me.* He died as much for you alone as for all men, so that in the act of dying He thought of you, prayed for you, and offered to the Father that sacrifice of the Cross for you. And as He came down from heaven to die for all men, so if it had been necessary He would have descended for you alone.

APPLICATION. See then whether He really loves you or not. See whether you have not just reason to show trust in Him, by submitting yourself completely in all things to His dispositions in your regard.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord lifteth up them that are cast down: the Lord loveth the just.* (Ps. cxlv, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what great wrong you do our Lord, Who gave Himself up entirely for you to the death of the cross, if you do not give yourself entirely to Him by casting yourself into the arms of His loving providence. But, in order to give yourself entirely

to Him, you must surrender yourself up completely to His will as a victim of obedience.

Application. Let Him then dispose of you in everything, either Himself immediately, or by means of His ministers. Do not seek to know how things will turn out for you, but resolve to live *in faith* as a babe on its mother's breast, where it reposes peacefully and is nourished.

Affections and resolutions. *O Lord God of hosts, who is like to thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and thy truth is round about thee. Thine arm is an arm of might.* (Ps. lxxxviii, 9, 14.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Fear ye him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. (Luke xii, 5.)

Consider firstly that David, whilst confessing to have feared and to fear still, none the less begged of God fresh fear. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear.* (Ps. cxviii, 120). He desired that the fear he had in spirit should abound also in his flesh so that, besides keeping the superior part of his soul subject to God, it might also keep in subjection the inferior part that rebelled.

Application. Blessed also would you be if you could attain the same end. You must however always continue to beseech God that He would instil His holy fear even into your very senses, your eyes, your tongue, your ears, into all your feelings and your whole self, so that your rebellious senses and self may not rise up against Him. A material

piercing passes from the body to the heart, but the spiritual from the heart to the body. The saints, when they thoroughly crucified their spirit by rendering it obedient to God, were instant also in crucifying and subjecting their flesh. Do not wonder that your flesh is increasingly rebellious, for you do not sufficiently fear God in spirit, and so you cannot come to fear Him with your flesh either, for it is always the last to lay down its arms and yield.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments.* (Ps. cxviii, 120.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the reason why David begged this holy fear was because he dreaded the divine judgments. *For I am afraid of thy judgments.* (Ibid.) By the divine judgments we may understand the divine commandments, or we may take them to mean the judgments of the counsels of God which are inscrutable. They may also mean the rigorous judgment God will pronounce on every one of us, when we come to pass out of this life. Therefore David asked God that He would suppress the rebellious rising of the flesh, because he feared lest it should make him fall into sin. He knew the rigorous judgment that God would pass on every thought, on every word, on every least action of his.

APPLICATION. What say you, who fear so little to lose the grace of God, who so easily promise yourself final perseverance and who make so little account of all the evil suggestions that assault you? Safety does not come from presumption; it comes from the holy fear of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy justice is as the mountains of God: thy judgments are a great*

deep. O how hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O God! (Ps. xxxv, 7, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that you should not only beg from God with the greatest earnestness this subjection of the flesh, *Pierce my flesh with thy fear*, but that you must also co-operate with God in order that you may obtain it. Thus did holy David, who afflicted his body with vigils, with fastings, with haircloth, with ashes, and other austerities.

APPLICATION. If you do not act thus your flesh, far from being crucified, will be rebellious against God and against His holy commandments.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I covered my soul in fasting: I made haircloth my garment.* (Ps. lxviii, 11, 12.)

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE WICKED SERVANT

(Read Matt. xviii, 23–35.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that you yourself are this servant who owes God ten thousand talents, for having transgressed so many times, and in so many ways, the precepts of His law. Your debt for sin and for the punishment due to it is greater than you can understand. Indeed the debt you contract for the very least sin is so great that all the saints could not pay it with all their prayers and good works, for God hates the least venial sin more than He loves the homage of all His creatures. The debt of punishment also is so great that no one can ever understand it, except those who are actually paying it, and that even to the last farthing, either in purgatory or in hell.

APPLICATION. Though you are so great a debtor to

God yet you do not humble yourself in His presence, and implore His pardon, as did the servant in the gospel before his master who *falling down besought Him saying : Have patience with me.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head.* (Ps. xxxix, 13.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how ready and prompt God is to pardon these great debts of sin and of punishment, and that on such easy conditions. Repent then with your whole heart of the ill you have done ; sincerely confess it in the sacrament of penance, and perform the penance the priest enjoins upon you. For in this sacrament Jesus Christ Himself comes to satisfy the divine justice for you, with the merits of His sufferings which are in fact of infinite value.

APPLICATION. On your part thank Jesus also Who has gained for you such complete remission, and though it has cost you comparatively little, oh ! think often how much it has cost your divine Redeemer !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people : thou hast covered all their sins.* (Ps. lxxxiv. 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that just as God is ready to forgive you all your sins, so He desires you to be equally ready to forgive the offences which your neighbour may commit against you. He has declared that He will never forgive your exceeding great debt, if you do not from your heart pardon the offences you have received from your brother : *So shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.* (Matt. xviii, 35.)

APPLICATION. God the Father loves all of us exceedingly. He desires nothing so greatly as to see

us living lovingly in peace with our brethren. Therefore it is not to be wondered at that he, who pardons the offences which he meets with, is specially dear to God. On the contrary God hates him exceedingly who cherishes rancour in his heart and who foments discord. Hence it is that an act of generous pardon has of itself sufficed to make more than one become a great saint, as, for instance, St. John Gualbert.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord : or who shall stand in his holy place ? The innocent in hands, and clean of heart who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbour.* (Ps. xxiii, 3, 4.)

MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LOVE OF ONE ANOTHER

This is my commandment, that you love one another. (John xv, 12.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY with what joy you should obey this precept of fraternal love. For among all the precepts our Blessed Lord calls this one particularly His own. But in order that this love be the right love, three conditions are necessary. You must love your neighbour rightly, efficaciously and for the sake of God alone. First rightly, that is by loving the good of his soul more than that of his body, by loving the nature received from God and made to the likeness of God ; at the same time hating the evil of sin which he has of himself. Love each and every one from this higher and supernatural motive, which should be what moves you to love them.

APPLICATION. How far do you observe this rule of rectitude ? Do you love your neighbour more for the

sake of the good of his soul or of that of his body? Do you love him for the true and the real reason that should make you love him? Or do you love him simply because he is to your liking, or on account only of relationship, or for some gift or talent which he possesses?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord keepeth all them that love him.* (Ps. cxliv, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you should love your neighbour efficaciously, and should show that you do so by word and action. Christ could have obtained our salvation by a single sigh or a sob, and yet He chose to buy it with a life of labour and with His blood.

APPLICATION. Can you pride yourself upon loving your neighbour thus efficaciously? Where are the labours you have to show for the benefit of souls? Far be it from you that you should be either one of those who, by their words make a show of loving their neighbour, but do not really love him at all, or of those who make a show of loving him, whilst in fact they hate him. The one is a bad form of deceit; the other is worse than treason. True love of our neighbour is to love him *without dissimulation* as the Apostle has it. (Rom. xii, 9.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy.* (Ps. cxviii, 124.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the third and most noble condition which crowns the love of our neighbour. It is to love him for the sake of God alone, that is, not for any benefit that you could hope to obtain, nor because of any benefit you have already received, but in order to do something that is exceedingly pleasing to God, and to obey the precept of your Lord, Who has so highly commended this love to you.

APPLICATION. If you love your neighbour because of the benefit you hope to gain thereby, you do not love him but really rather yourself. If you love him because of the benefit you have received from him, you make indeed a praiseworthy act of gratitude but you do not entirely fulfil the divine precept, which teaches you to love not only your neighbour who does you good, but your enemy also. Behold Jesus Christ on the cross Who, without the least self-interest, prayed to the Father to bless even His murderers who had nailed Him there!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With my whole heart have I sought after thee.* (Ps. cxviii, 10.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PRAY ALWAYS

We ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke xviii, 1.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY what it is that our Lord requires in saying: *We ought always to pray, and not to faint.* It means first, that you are never to neglect prayer at appointed times, just as you neglect not to give refreshment to your body at regular hours. Secondly, that you should be so given to prayer, as to pray as much as you can outside the fixed hours. Of one, who studies as much as he can, it is said that he is always studying because of his love of study. It ought to be possible to make, with truth, a similar statement with regard to your prayer. Thirdly, that you should not give up, or cease to pray, if you are not answered. Persevere faithfully!

APPLICATION. Examine yourself and see whether you pray at the proper times, whether you pray as

much as you might outside the set hours, and whether you persevere in prayer, even when it seems to you that God takes no notice of what concerns you. If you do all this, rest assured that you pray always and will obtain salvation.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee will I cry : O Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear my voice.* (Ps. v, 4.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY why God desires that we should always pray to Him. Being through His own very nature so bountiful and so liberal, it would seem unlikely that He should desire our incessant supplications. But no, He desires that we should always pray to Him, because He loves us so greatly. To pray to God is not like petitioning earthly princes. For if we do not obtain our petition with them we gain nothing, but with God our prayer in itself is a great gain. Thus, in supplicating Him, how many acts of virtue are exercised at one and the same time, such as acts of religion, of faith, of confidence, of humility, of patience, and so forth !

APPLICATION. No supplication made to God is ever made in vain. He who obtains his request receives the blessing he asks. He who does not obtain it, has the merit of having asked. For this reason our Lord says to you : *We ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, the God of my salvation : I have cried in the day and in the night, before thee. Let my prayer come in before thee.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 2–3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what great harm it does you to neglect prayer. For in praying you are certain of a reward, although you may not receive that for which

you ask, whilst in ceasing to pray you lose great merit. Yet prayer must not be a means but an end : *Pray without ceasing.*

APPLICATION. And what does it really matter if you do not gain what you ask ? In praying you gain what is far more desirable, which is to be admitted to audience and intercourse with God. Look at the favoured ones at court, how they value being admitted into the presence of the prince and being able to speak with him even if they gain nothing. And do you so little esteem having intercourse with God ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hear, O Lord, the voice of my supplication : when I pray to thee, when I lift up my hands to thy holy temple.* (Ps. xxvii, 2.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LIVELY FAITH

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you shall say to this mountain : Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove. (Matt. xvii, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY who these are whom God calls specially the just and His dear ones. *My just man liveth by faith.* (Heb. x, 38.) They are those who live by a lively faith, that is faith inflamed by charity ; for if it is not such, it is a dead faith, which can never impart life. The just are said to live by faith, because the life of the soul is God, and faith is the first virtue that unites us to God. The life of the body is said to come from the heart, for the heart is that which keeps the soul united to the body. So it is with faith. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is.* (Heb. xi, 6.)

APPLICATION. Consider then with what great

care you should preserve this faith. You must indeed cultivate other virtues such as charity, patience and the like, but especially faith. For among all the virtues it is like the heart amid the members of the body. Consequently chase away most carefully even the least temptation against faith, by renewing the protestation of your faith to God. Bow your head *in the service of faith* without disquiet as to what your thoughts may suggest to the contrary against your will: *With all watchfulness keep your heart, because life issueth out from it.* (Prov. iv, 23.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In him our heart shall rejoice: and in his holy name we have trusted.* (Ps. xxxii, 21.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the just man lives by faith, not alone because faith gives life to his soul, but because it feeds and nourishes it likewise. All harm that comes to the soul results from weakness of faith. He who has solid faith and stands fast *in the world of truth* with his intellect, will stand equally fast with his will *in the power of God.* He will not be elated by prosperity nor will he give way in adversity, because he always remembers and is persuaded that he must value the things of eternity alone. A weak faith, in the same way as poor food, makes us languish.

APPLICATION. Strive then to increase your faith by the exercise of frequent acts of faith, by the reading of books that will help to increase it, and above all by often asking it of God. *Lord, increase my faith.* (Luke xvii, 5.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *To thee, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul; in thee, O my God, I put my trust.* (Ps. xxiv, 1, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the just man lives by faith

because this may be said to be his ordinary food. One does not say that a person lives on the food of which he makes a meal one day in a hundred, but on the food which he ordinarily eats. To the just, faith is sometimes his only food. When the help of God, His lights and His consolations are perhaps all of them wanting, then there is no way of living except by faith alone : *I know whom I have believed.* (2 Tim. i, 12.)

APPLICATION. See then what a large provision of faith you have to accumulate, so as to be able to live in such seasons of penury. If you have not faith then you will not be able to endure long : *If you will not believe you shall not continue.* (Isa. vii, 9.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Shew, O Lord, thy ways to me, and teach me thy paths. Direct me in thy truth, and teach me ; for thou art my Saviour.* (Ps. xxiv, 4, 5.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TRUE FEAR OF GOD

The other rebuked him saying : Neither dost thou fear God? (Luke xxiii, 40.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY one of the great fruits, which is the result of the holy fear of God, is to have much confidence at the hour of death. This is the universal law. You may have seen others die and may have noticed that those, who in life had been the most lax and careless and the least exact in the fulfilment of their duty, showed themselves at death full of fear. On the contrary, those who had led a good and exact life were in death full of confidence.

APPLICATION. Consider well to which of these

classes you now belong. Thus you may surely predict what will be your state when you come to die.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God shall show forth to his people the power of his works ; holy and terrible is his name : the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* (Ps. cx, 9, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in order to have this confidence at the time of death, an ordinary fear will not suffice you now. It must be great and extend to all things and to all times. It has to be a fear, not like to that of some who, sometimes and in some things, are more fearful than even the very best, but who in all the rest display a conscience altogether too easy. It must be a fear that, from morning till night, makes you guard against doing or saying anything, that could displease or give offence to your Lord ; a fear in fact that shall surround you as a sea, so that being immersed in it you cannot emerge from it.

APPLICATION. In the Book of Proverbs (Prov. xxiii, 17) it is written : *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.* Blessed will you be, if you live in this fear not only frequently but continuously all the day long.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Serve ye the Lord with fear : and rejoice unto him with trembling.* (Ps. ii, 11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that to him, who has such a fear, it is promised that he shall have at death confidence of coming forth from that passage happily and with all hope of being safe : *He shall have hope in the latter end.* (Prov. xxiii, 18.) It does not say certainty, but hope. Thus you may understand that no one, even by living all his days in the holy fear of

God, can render himself absolutely secure. For the eternal salvation of each one, even the most holy, up to the last moment depends upon those special aids of actual grace, which God out of His pure bounty is desirous to give him.

APPLICATION. If even saints at that dread moment of death can have no more than hope without certainty, what will become of you, if you live in so little fear of God? Resolve now to live in fear of doing any kind of thing, however small it may be, that offends your God. Then at death you may indeed hope to have the divine assistance.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.* (Ps. cxxvii, 4.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

I am the way, the truth, and the life. (John xiv, 6.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ is the way, and as such teaches us the only, the best, and the most perfect way to reach heaven. There are three obstacles which impede us on our way thither, viz., the love of the flesh, the love of riches, and the love of our own will. Now Christ, in teaching you by His example, has taught you the real way to heaven, and that not by laws of fear but by laws of love.

APPLICATION. Reflect how greatly you should thank God Who has made you know this happy way. Also how earnestly you should try to observe His divine directions, which are laws of love and not of constraint.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths.* (Ps. cxviii, 105.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Christ is also the truth, Who came into the world to teach the eternal truths of God by His preaching : *He hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor.* (Luke iv, 18.) He never ceases till now to teach them to those, who wish to be His followers and disciples. He teaches the eternal truths by the divine Scriptures, which He has left to the Church. He teaches them especially by enlightening the mind, and by speaking to the heart of him, who is desirous of hearing them and who sits humbly at His feet like Magdalene (Luke x, 39), and listens to His divine word.

APPLICATION. Do you also earnestly desire to learn in this school and to listen to such a Master ? He is the only One Who can and Who does teach you the truth. Do you love the divine Scriptures and holy books ? Do you gladly sit at the feet of the crucified One to hear His voice ? *They that approach to his feet shall receive of his doctrine.* (Deut. xxxiii, 3.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The truth of the Lord endureth for ever.* (Ps. cxvi, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ is not only the way and the truth, but that He is also the life. In Him is the life of grace now, and in Him is the future life of glory. As the life of glory is the blessedness of our heavenly country, so the life of grace is the blessedness of this exile of ours here. He who entirely fulfils the law of Jesus Christ and earnestly listens to His teaching, enjoys the life of grace, nor does he seek anything else in order to make life happy. But how few are those who are fully content with hearing God in their hearts and following His inspirations ?

APPLICATION. If you do not know how to live

in perfect contentment, it is because you do not perfectly observe the teaching of Jesus Christ. Instead of listening to it, you rather wander about listening to the news and reasonings of the world. Oh how miserable it is thus to lose true contentment by running after the delights of vanity!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I set the Lord always in my sight, for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, thou shalt fill me with joy with thy countenance.* (Ps. xv, 8–10.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SPIRITUAL RICHES

Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven. (Matt. vi, 20.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the difference between worldly and spiritual riches. Worldly riches are the cause of spiritual ruin to those who love them overmuch; spiritual riches are the source of salvation to those who love them truly. Worldly riches can only benefit us when we spend them well; spiritual, when we possess and preserve them. Yet who is there who, in order to accumulate spiritual riches which concern the soul, devotes one-half of the labour and thought, that is usually bestowed upon accumulating the riches that belong to the body?

APPLICATION. Remember that worldly riches may not unfrequently be obtained by donation or by inheritance. Spiritual riches, however, can never be had without labour. Ponder this well and apply it to your life and daily actions.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have been delighted*

in the way of thy testimonies, as in all riches. (Ps. cxviii, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the spiritual riches of salvation are wisdom and knowledge; wisdom, which regards our last end, namely, God; knowledge, which concerns the means that conduct us to that great end. *Riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge.* (Isa. xxxiii, 6.) If then you wish to possess true wisdom and knowledge, learn to discern well what the means are for obtaining them. For these are the real riches of salvation. Search down in the depths of your heart, to see what is the end you set before you in your life and work, whether it be really God or not rather the vain idols of glory, of dignity, of ease.

APPLICATION. Beg of God without intermission that He would give you true wisdom to wish only to work for your true end, and true knowledge that you may know how to work most perfectly and most securely for that end.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My mouth shall speak wisdom: and the meditation of my heart understanding.* (Ps. xlviii, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that it is not enough to have these riches if you have not wherein to preserve them. For as the miser keeps his treasure in a chest, where he safeguards his money under lock and key, so you also should have protection for your spiritual riches, and this is no other than the fear of God: *The fear of the Lord is his treasure.* (Isa., ibid.) This it is, that will preserve your riches of true wisdom and knowledge safe from all thieves that would rob you of them. It will keep them from men, by making you fear more to offend God than them. It will preserve you from the

devils, by making you fear the anger of God more than their rage, and will thus close your ears to their temptations. It will preserve you from domestic thieves, which are your own disorderly appetites, by making you fear more to lose God than to lose any present good, and thus will keep you from yielding to their assaults upon you.

APPLICATION Reflect often on this salutary fear of God. Let it be always your keeper, for without it you may easily be robbed of these riches of salvation by enemies who are ever on the alert.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Establish thy word to thy servant, in thy fear.* (Ps. cxviii, 38.)

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TRIBUTE TO CÆSAR

(Read Matt. xxii, 15–21.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the admirable answer given by our Blessed Lord to the malicious question of the Pharisees, as to whether it was right to pay tribute to Cæsar or not. They wished to make Him hated either by the Romans by saying, No! or by the Jews if He replied in the affirmative. *Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's : and to God the things that are God's.* (Matt. xxii, 21.)

APPLICATION. This is what all faithful servants of Christ should do, *i.e.*, leave to the world the things of the world. To the world belong honours, pomp, riches. Such things then you should leave to those who are in the world and who are of the world. Consider seriously and see if there be in your heart any inordinate affections for these things. Do you aim at withdrawing your heart from worldly things, or

do you try, as far as you can, to procure honour or riches or ease for yourself? Be ashamed of having lived a life so contrary to the maxims of Christ our Lord.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Shall not my soul be subject to God? For from him is my salvation.* (Ps. lxi, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is not enough to leave to the world that which is the world's, but that you must also give to God what is God's. You belong to God by many titles, and especially those of creation and of redemption. By the right of creation, for God made you out of nothing and gave you a perfect body, together with an immortal soul made to the image of God. By the title of your redemption, for He bought you back from the slavery of sin, and from the slavery of the devil, at the cost of His own most precious Blood, and of His own life.

APPLICATION. Notwithstanding so many favours as these, how many times have you not left the service of God in order to follow your own disorderly inclinations? How often have you used your faculties and your talents to please creatures by displeasing your Creator?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be thou, O my soul, subject to God: For he is my God and my Saviour: he is my helper, I shall not be moved.* (Ps. lxi, 6, 7.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY in what this rendering to God the things that are God's consists. It consists in seriously persuading yourself that all you have and all you are belongs to God. Your body, soul, senses and faculties all belong to God, Who gave them to you; and to God you must render them by using them in His service and to His glory. Powers of mind and body, health and strength, and all the other gifts of nature, are all God's, as well as all the good that you

can achieve by means of them. Render it then all to God by recognising it as His gift alone, and attributing to Him alone the glory. From God especially came the gifts of grace, for of your own and of yourself you have nothing but sin.

APPLICATION. Learn then once for all to recognise all as coming from God, and to thank Him for it. Confess that in yourself there is nothing of good, that by yourself you are only able to do what is evil. If you are faithful in rendering to God all that He has given you, He will be ever still more liberal in enriching you with His gifts.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am thy servant : give me understanding.* (Ps. cxviii, 125.)

MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE DIVINE JUDGMENT

They shall render account for it in the day of judgment. (Matt. xii, 36.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the saints have all feared the divine judgment. St. Hilary after seventy years of faithful service to God trembled and was afraid. If then you do not fear it, you need to fear it all the more, because you are far from being like the saints. And first you should fear this judgment on account of yourself. For if there are none, even among the saints, who can say : *My heart is clean* (Prov. xx, 9), how can you say it, who more than once perhaps have by sin lost your innocence and baptismal grace, and who now cannot be certain of having regained it by due repentance ? And if you have recovered it, who can assure you that you will not lose it again ? Do you not hear what holy Job says :

Behold, among his saints none is unchangeable. (Job xv, 15.)

APPLICATION. If even among the holy there have been terrible falls, what should you not fear for yourself ? All your life you have so badly corresponded to the lights, the invitations, and the inspirations of God. You who have been so negligent in good, so ungrateful for benefits received, and who daily commit so many venial sins. Now see whether you yourself have not reason to fear the divine judgment.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant : for in thy sight no man living shall be justified.* (Ps. cxlii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that you should fear this judgment still more on account of the judge. In Himself He is perfect holiness, and supremely abhors every stain of sin. He most thoroughly searches it out, and punishes it most severely. *I am he that searcheth the reins and the heart.* (Apoc. ii, 23.) How much you should guard against all those evil movements of the heart! These movements are so insidious and so hard for you to judge of. And yet it is of these that our Lord will make the most solemn examination : *He searcheth the reins and the heart,* leaving not the least atom of evil unpunished.

APPLICATION. Bear always in mind then that, before the divine Presence, the sins and imperfections of even the holiest shall be discovered. *The heavens are not pure in his sight.* (Job xv, 15.) O how much then it is to your advantage to keep yourself far from the danger of such a judgment !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Judge me, O Lord, according to my justice, O God who searchest the hearts and reins.* (Ps. vii, 10–11.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what is the true and only way of escaping this most terrible judgment of God. It is by confessing now that you are ashamed of your conduct, by declaring to Him now beforehand that you are guilty. If you do this God will not enter into judgment with you, because you are already judged by yourself. Such is the benefit that accrues to him who from his heart confesses himself to be guilty, that he is thereupon absolved. *If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged.* (1 Cor. xi, 31.)

APPLICATION. Strive to keep keenly alive before the eyes of your soul the knowledge of your own misery. Recall it often before God. Acknowledge it before Him, saying with a contrite heart : *Enter not into judgment with thy servant.* (Ps. cxlii, 2.) You will see how salutary this will be to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.* (Ps. xviii, 10.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CHRIST'S REWARD TO THE FAITHFUL

You are they who have continued with me in my temptations ; and I dispose to you, as my Father has disposed to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table. (Luke xxii, 28–30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Christ promised the Apostles that in heaven He would refresh them at His table, not indeed that in heaven they eat or drink, for *the kingdom of God is not in eating and drinking* (Rom. xiv, 17), but, as the Apostles were still unlearned in spiritual things, He would have them understand, under the figure of a meal, that they should hereafter rejoice in a repast of most joyous delights.

Moreover, that they would have the glory of being ever with Him at table, *i.e.*, of being as near as possible to Him in His kingdom. At the universal judgment also, the Apostles would sit on thrones of power like unto His, judging with Him the human race. For He intended to dispose to them His kingdom, as His divine Father had disposed to Him a kingdom : *And I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom* (Luke xxii, 29), with the same love, and conferring the same intense happiness of seeing God.

APPLICATION. What think you of this recompense, this glory, this kingdom given by Christ to His Apostles ? You too will partake of the same, but exactly in the measure in which you shall have been faithful to Christ in life.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear.* (Ps. xvi, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the reason why our Blessed Redeemer willed to raise the Apostles to so sublime a position. It was because they had been faithful to Him in His afflictions : *You are they who have continued with me in my temptations.* Admire here the liberality of so great a Lord towards His servants. Because the Apostles had shown faithfulness to Him in His afflictions and sufferings, He would make them, as far as possible, His equals in His heavenly kingdom.

APPLICATION. Do you not then feel anxious to accompany Him and to remain faithful to Him ? Wherever He leads with His cross, endeavour to stay near to Him after the example of the Apostles.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is faithful in all his words : and holy in all his works.* (Ps. cxliv, 13.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the holy apostles were in

fact faithful to Jesus in His afflictions during those three first years, and yet forsook Him in His sacred Passion. Nevertheless our Lord declares them to have been faithful, because at His Resurrection they would immediately return to Him more faithful even than at first, like sheep that had wandered from their shepherd. For our Lord makes no account of those sins which are truly repented of with tears.

Application. If, to your shame, you have gone away from Christ by a sinful or a careless life, so little conformable to one who professes to be a follower of Him, do not put off your return : *Delay not to be converted to the Lord.* (Ecclus. v, 8.) For if in spite of such a departure you repent sincerely from your heart, He will treat you as if you had never abandoned Him.

Affections and resolutions. *Turn, O my soul, into thy rest : for the Lord hath been bountiful unto thee.* (Ps. cxiv, 7.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PATIENCE

In your patience you shall possess your souls. (Luke xxi, 19.)

Consider firstly that the patient man is said by the Wise Man (Prov. xvi, 32) to be *better than the valiant.* He who bears patiently the disasters he meets with, is better than him who voluntarily goes forth to seek and meet tribulation. For the former gives proof of more solid virtue. Perhaps you love to suffer by self-inflictions, but, if God sends you some adversity, if you receive some mortification from superiors, or meet with some offence, you resent it at once.

APPLICATION. Realise however that there is far greater merit and virtue in your accepting, with perfect resignation to the will of God, those occasions of suffering that daily come to you unbidden, than in your going in search of them by your own will and caprice. Your own will is easily to be found in sufferings that you choose yourself ; but, in those that you bear with patience at another's will, you exercise great humility and other virtues too.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Be thou O my soul subject to God, for from him is my patience.* (Ps. lxi. 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in order to attain to this patience, it is necessary that you conquer yourself. If you obtain this dominion over your own self, you will not need to envy the conquerors of great cities, nor even those fervent preachers, who move and convert to tears of penance and amendment of life the people of an entire city. For any simple, unlearned soul, who has attained to the conquest of his passions, is more esteemed of God than is the fervid worker, who has not arrived at subduing his vanity and self-interest, his anger, envy, and similar disorderly appetites which predominate in him.

APPLICATION. See then how important it is that you should seriously set yourself to overcome yourself. Thus you will obtain true patience, which is of far greater value than any strength.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.* (Ps. cix, 2.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that to make this self-conquest is all the more glorious the more difficult it is. In order to resist and conquer your appetites, you have not, as it were, the control of your entire self, for part of you fights for the victory, and part of you rebels.

Moreover your self-love makes you pity yourself, and makes you tender to yourself. For even in the very act of repressing your vices you defend them with a thousand excuses.

APPLICATION. If you wish therefore to conquer your passions and your defects, you must treat them as rebels. But because you can never hope to subdue them entirely, you must weaken them by constant victories, without ever making peace or truce with them. This is the only way to master them. *Conquer yourself.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord. If they shall have no dominion over me, then shall I be without spot.* (Ps. xviii, 13, 14.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REALISING GOD'S PRESENCE

There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not. (John i, 26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that these words were said by St. John the Baptist to the Jews, because Christ was in the very heart of Judea, and yet most of them knew Him not, and those who did know Him paid little heed to Him. The same may happen with regard to yourself. For you have not only your Lord continually with you under the sacramental species, but you have Him also in the interior of your own heart. Yet all the time *you know Him not*, because you do not heed Him.

APPLICATION. Is it not to your shame that our Lord has been so long within you, and that you do not pay attention to Him? You do not attain to

even a slight knowledge of Him, so that He might say : *So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known me?* (John xiv, 9.) Therefore strive to realise that your God is present with you, and never lose sight of Him. Would it not be impossible that you should do anything that is displeasing to Him, if you knew that He was present to you? *Walk before me, and be perfect.* (Gen. xvii, 1.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord : they shall praise thee for ever and ever.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 5.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that in two ways you must exercise yourself in order to acquire this excellent practice of the presence of God—the one by the understanding, the other by the will. With the understanding, apply yourself earnestly to realise by means of a living faith that our Lord dwells within you. You must however at the same time realise that God dwells in you as a king in his kingdom. He dwells there in many ways in His Kingly Person, both by the knowledge He has of all that concerns you, and by the power He exercises over you. He resides within you by His perfect knowledge of you, because He knows and sees everything that goes on within the most hidden recesses of your interior. He resides within you by His power, because He can dispose of you according to His good pleasure.

APPLICATION. If you will reflect seriously on this frequently and bear it in mind, you will not so easily lose sight of Him. You will rejoice in the fruits that result from this His divine presence in you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou art thyself my king and my God.* (Ps. xliii, 5.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how you should also exercise

yourself with your will. First by frequent and devout affections during the day, affections of love, of thanksgiving, of contrition, and similar ones. Thus you will not leave Him solitary within you. Secondly by often invoking Him that He may direct you in your ways, that He may help you in your temptations, and comfort you in your afflictions. Thus you will show how utterly you are dependent on Him. God is within you, all intent on granting you favours. He longs for nothing more than to bless you, but He wishes His favours to be asked for.

APPLICATION. Thus must you live in His divine presence, urged thereunto by a motive of gratitude and of necessity. For if you lose sight of your God, you are become like earth without the sun, capable only of producing thorns and thistles without any fruit.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way : who walk in the law of the Lord.* (Ps. cxviii, 1.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

AWAITING OUR LORD

Be you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding. (Luke xii, 36.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the life of all the saints upon the earth has been a continual expectation. Before the coming of Christ, the saints did nothing but look for the fulfilment of the promise of the Lord Who was to come, to be the author of their faith, to redeem them from sin, to teach them by His doctrine, to strengthen them by His example. After the coming of Christ, the saints did nothing but continually look

for the return of the Lord, as the consummator of their faith, Who would glorify them. *My people shall long for my return.* (Osee xi, 7.)

APPLICATION. See then that life should be an awaiting. *And you yourselves like to men who wait for their Lord when he shall return from the wedding.* (Luke xii, 36.) Is it hard for you to wait patiently for your Lord and, in the meantime, to deprive yourself of all inordinate satisfactions and pleasures ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Expect the Lord : do manfully. And let thy heart take courage : and wait thou for the Lord.* (Ps. xxvi, 14.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the saints were saints because they lived separated in great measure from the rest of men. They reckoned that they had little or nothing to do with this world. Like pilgrims they were always waiting and sighing after their heavenly country. It is not becoming therefore that we should basely degenerate from their example. Is it not rather shameful, that we attach ourselves so much to the things of this world which is not really ours ?

APPLICATION. Reflect that you spring from those who were quite detached from the world, of those who were entirely spiritual and holy, and that you likewise should be such. Of what use is it for the river to boast of the purity of its source if it is itself defiled with mud ?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *What have I in heaven ? And besides thee what do I desire upon earth ?* (Ps. lxxii, 25.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how mistaken it is of you to seek here before the time what is reserved for hereafter. All the pleasures and diversions, that you seek for now, are in fact thefts of those delights that are utterly

indescribable, which you are meant to enjoy hereafter to the full. Be content then to wait, and do not be impatient. Now is the time in which you must live by faith only, console yourself by faith, animate yourself by faith, and not lose faith in prosperous or adverse times. Your life will not always go on in the same even tenour. Sometimes you will be in desolation, sometimes in joy; sometimes you will have honour, sometimes contempt; sometimes you will be strong, sometimes weak.

APPLICATION. Learn then always to be equally faithful to God. Journey by the light of faith to your country, where the glory that your Lord promises to you is truly called life. How much more perfect and more happy is that life than the painful and laborious life that one leads on this earth! You should take no account of this earthly life but despise it and spend it willingly in the service of God. Thus one day you may attain to the enjoyment of that true life, which *God will give to those that never change their faith from him.* (Tob. ii, 18.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart: and I will glorify thy name for ever.* (Ps. lxxxv, 12.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LIFE A WARFARE

I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers. (Matt. viii, 9.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that this life may be called, and is, a field of battle on which you have to fight against your disorderly inclinations, which are strengthened by the evil spirits who are leagued

against you. Hence it follows that this is a time of labour, not of repose. Although in time of warfare the enemy be not in evidence, yet each one must be ever ready and prepared to fight. All must be in their quarters and at their posts, exposed maybe to the hardships of weather, to the discomforts of hunger and loss of sleep.

APPLICATION. What say you to this? Would you wish to pass this life in repose and to seek for yourself every satisfaction? This surely suits not one who is really on the battle-field.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thou, O Lord, art most high for evermore, for behold thy enemies, O Lord, for behold thy enemies shall perish.* (Ps. xci, 9, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, as this life is warfare, it is not the time for rewards but a time for meriting them. It is a time of labour amid immense risks and dangers. It is always the very best soldiers, more than any others, who place themselves in the front ranks and at the very cannon's mouth. Can you then so easily condemn the action of Providence, in so often allowing the most just men to have the largest share of suffering?

APPLICATION. We have then but to wait. In the end, we shall see how much more those are rewarded by God, who have laboured and fought more than all others. At present, He gives them in abundance the strength of grace which is proportioned to the burdens He lays upon them.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *See my abjection and my labour; and forgive me all my sins.* (Ps. xxiv, 18.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that as this life is a time of warfare, it follows that it is a time also of great danger,

not one of safety. For you are continually surrounded by a thousand snares and a thousand attacks. Oh if you could only see the falls that came in the end to those miserable ones, who now mourn their eternal loss in hell! How much less you would trust in yourself, and how much less you would promise yourself safety! *For thou art going in the midst of snares, and walking upon the arms of them that are grieved.* (Ecclus. ix, 20.) The way to keep yourself from perils, is never to act or live according to caprice, but to live under exact obedience to the law of God. A good soldier in battle does not stand still at his post, nor move, nor fight without his commander's order.

APPLICATION. This life is for you a time of warfare, and therefore also the time to be obedient, and dependent in everything on the commands of God and of those who are to you in His place. In this way you will be both safer in all the dangers and will gain more glorious victories. *An obedient man shall speak of victories.* (Prov. xxi, 28.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My hand shall help him : and my arm shall strengthen him.* (Ps. lxxxviii, 22.)

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MIRACLE OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

(Read Matt. ix, 18–26.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Jesus, when about to perform the striking miracle of recalling to life the little daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, commanded all the people to leave the room of the

dead child, where they were making a tumult and weeping. He so acted because He did not wish to have spectators of this wondrous work. Our Blessed Lord gives you in this an example that good works should not be done with the view that they may be seen and praised by men. You must distinguish between two sorts of good works, those that are common and prescribed by your state of life, others that are private and extraordinary. The first, which are common, you should perform in public, as ordinary Christian duties. The second, which are extraordinary, you should perform, as far as possible, secretly, so as to avoid all danger of vainglory.

APPLICATION. If then sometimes you must do your good works in public, for the sake of good example for others, be careful that the motive is the honour of God, and the good of your neighbours, and not your own self-love. Otherwise it will be said of you, *They have received their reward.* (Matt. vi, 2.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him ; and on them that hope in his mercy.* (Ps. xxxii, 18.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that our Lord sent away the crowd of people, when He desired to raise the child to life. Thus He teaches you that, if you would rise from your miseries, and from your tepidity, you must get out of that crowd of thoughts and disorderly affections, that tumult also of useless and of superfluous conversations. All such matters disturb the heart and distract the mind, and prevent you from being sufficiently retired and recollected within yourself.

APPLICATION. By so doing you will dispose yourself to receive clearer lights and stronger helps from

heaven as God promised by Osee (ii, 14) : *I will allure her into the wilderness ; and I will speak to her heart.*

Affections and resolutions. *My eyes are ever towards the Lord.* (Ps. xxiv, 15.)

Consider thirdly that the raising to life of the child was accomplished by our Lord, by the act of stretching out His arm, and taking her by the hand ; *He took her by the hand and the maid arose.* (Matt. ix, 25.) By that omnipotent touch He infused into her the spirit of life, and awakened her from the sleep of death. Oh omnipotent touch of the right hand of God !

Application. For you it is also needful that our Lord should stretch out His hand, in order to awaken you from the sleep of your tepidity and to raise you to the life of fervour of spirit. If He stretched not out His holy hand to lift you out of your miseries, you too might cry out : *Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul, and there is no sure standing* (Ps. lxviii, 2, 3). But as *the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save* (Isa. lix, 1), plead earnestly that He will stretch out His merciful hand and touch your heart, raising you from the mire of sin, so that you may walk in the way of greater care and perfection.

Affections and resolutions. *Their own arm did not save them. But thy right hand, and thy arm, and the light of thy countenance : because thou wast pleased with them.* (Ps. xliii, 4.)

MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION

Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke xxi, 36.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that, by these words, our Lord would have you understand that your eternal salvation is not a work that depends altogether upon yourself, nor yet altogether upon Him. You have to do all you can on your part, and for this reason He says that you must watch. *Watch ye* by being on your guard, never giving place to temptation, and by being diligent to do your actions well. Then, as if you had done nothing, you must pray and have recourse to God, *praying*, humbly beseeching Him to protect you by His most holy grace.

APPLICATION. Hence the rule by which you must work out your salvation, is to labour as if all depended on yourself and yet to look to God as if all depended upon Him.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *O Lord, the God of my salvation: I have cried in the day and in the night before thee.* (Ps. lxxxvii, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it is not enough merely to have begun in this way. You must go on unceasingly and indefatigably to the very end: *at all times*. It will not be sufficient to watch and pray in times of temptation only. You must pray and watch at all times. Shepherds watch their flocks even when the wolves and thieves are far away, so that they may never be in danger. So too you have to act

with regard to your soul. Watch and pray so that temptation may not come. *Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* (Matt. xxvi, 41.)

APPLICATION. When, then, you do not keep sufficient guard over yourself, and neglect prayer, when you do not often during the day turn to God, or recommend yourself to Him, temptation need not come to seek you, but you go into it of yourself. You have already thrown away your arms and have rendered yourself incapable of defence. As there is no time when, if left to your own weak strength, you would not undoubtedly fall and perish, so too there is no time when it is not necessary to watch and to pray.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Have mercy upon me, for unto thee I have cried all the day.* (Ps. lxxxv, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that all your own diligence is not enough to make you worthy of salvation. Consequently, you have to beseech God by unremitting prayers, *that you may be made worthy.* Thus, by His mercy, He may consider you as if you really were worthy to escape the evil lot at the last day, and *to stand before the Son of man.* (Luke xxi, 36.) At that great tribunal the just will stand firm, because of their good conscience : *Then shall the just stand with great constancy* (Wisd. v, 1), while the wicked shall fall without hope of ever rising again : *The wicked shall not rise again in judgment.* (Ps. i, 5.)

APPLICATION. Let us beg the good God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of all the Saints, that we may be found worthy to stand with constancy before the tribunal of Christ upon the great Judgment Day.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Give ear, O Lord,*

to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my petition. I have called upon thee in the day of my trouble : because thou hast heard me. (Ps. lxxxv, 6–7.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

IMPATIENCE

In your patience you shall possess your souls. (Luke xxi, 19.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the great evil to which the impatient man is subject. He is not master of himself. For he is not master of his understanding, but acts precipitously, and even foolishly, without hearkening to the dictates of reason. He is not master of his will, for he is ruled by the ill-regulated affections of annoyance, of sadness, of fear, which change and turn him about like a small craft tossed about by the winds. Our Lord had reason then to say : *In your patience you shall possess your souls.* (Luke xxi, 19.)

APPLICATION. Reflect on yourself and strive to amend yourself efficaciously, if you are in any way dominated by this vice.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul is continually in my hands : and I have not forgotten thy law.* (Ps. cxviii, 109.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that an impatient man is necessarily unstable in good. Directly he begins to feel the tedium and fatigue of the work he has undertaken, he wearies of it. Whether it be study, prayer, or reading, he at once gives it up. If it be the spirit of penance or of mortification, he soon begins to neglect it. Neither does he remain long firm in his good resolutions.

APPLICATION. What good then can the impatient person hope for ? For it is perseverance in good, that ordinarily disposes us more than anything else to final perseverance. Therefore although you read : *He that shall persevere to the end shall be saved* (Matt. xxiv, 13), elsewhere you likewise read : *He that shall endure to the end he shall be saved*, so that there cannot be *perseverance* without *endurance*.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is the support of them that fear him, mine eyes are ever towards the Lord.* (Ps. xxiv, 14, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that there are three means you should take, in order to obtain this patience which is so necessary. The first is to ask it often of God in prayer with great earnestness. The second is to foresee and prepare for those incidents that may perturb you, such as injuries or humiliations, sickness, difficult orders and the like, and so be forearmed. For it is the unexpected that puts even the greatest strongholds in danger. Remember that on this earth you are on a field of battle ; hereafter will come to you peace and the reward. The third means is that you should exercise yourself as much as possible in acts of patience, on occasion of the little contrarieties you frequently meet with. Bear with the defects of your neighbours, trials of the weather, discomforts of body, affliction of soul, that come upon you so often.

APPLICATION. When you perceive any trial about to come upon you, recollect yourself awhile, recommend yourself to God, and imagine that with His own mouth He says to you : *In your patience you shall possess your souls.* (Luke xxi, 19.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have put my trust*

in thee, O Lord. I said : Thou art my God ; My lot is in thy hands. (Ps. xxx, 15, 16.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LIFE WITHOUT SOLICITUDE

Be not solicitous for your life. (Matt. vi, 25.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in Holy Writ those are justly censured who are never content with their present state, in which God has placed them. (cf. Eccles. vii, 1.) They are for ever striving to push forward, without knowing whether the dignity, or duty, or position they seek after, would be beneficial or harmful to them. God alone knows which is the way by which you are sure to be saved. Therefore, as a pilgrim, who knows not the road that leads to his country, must let himself be guided by one who does know, so likewise you must let yourself be guided by God, and by him who on earth holds the place of God to you.

APPLICATION. Is it not utter folly, to try to regulate yourself by your own caprice, in striving after this or that position or employment, in disregard and even in defiance of God ? Let yourself rather be guided, if possible, by the sure rule of obedience ; for it will never prove hurtful to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let me know that this is thy hand, and that thou, O Lord, hast done it.* (Ps. cviii, 27.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that if the attainment of this place or of that office, which you so anxiously seek after, brings you no harm, at any rate it may harm you to be seeking for it. The anxiety for it distracts your thoughts from your present clear duties, and

from the pursuit of that which really matters to you, which is the business of your eternal salvation. You should never cease to make that your chief study. The more it is in doubt, the more supremely important is it also that you should ever strive after it.

APPLICATION. In the search for positions which are difficult to attain, how much the good of your own soul may be neglected. Employ for it, at least, a solicitude equal to that which you use, in order to gain something as to which you cannot possibly say whether it will profit your own salvation or not. You are a pilgrim and your country is heaven. Employ, then, all necessary time and efforts in learning and in finding the sure way of arriving there, for that alone is important for you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Ps. xli, 3.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the time given you to obtain that, which alone matters to you, is little and short. Have you then the heart to lose it in seeking after that which is of no consequence? The time is little, because there are few days, *the days of his pilgrimage*: and brief, because it *passeth like a shadow.* (Eccles. vii, 1.) Therefore do not occupy yourself overmuch in seeking those things which pass away with time, but seek rather to walk safely in the sure road which leads to your country, and to acquire your eternal heritage.

APPLICATION. If a pilgrim has to reach his country, within a brief time which has been predetermined for him, under pain of losing an inheritance, how he uses every effort not to lose time! He robs himself of sleep, of conversation, and of all else that might

otherwise interest him. You who are a pilgrim should surely do as much. For if you do not reach the end, at the time fixed for you by God, you are without any remedy, and will never reach it at all !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Man is like to vanity : his days pass away like a shadow.* (Ps. cxliii, 4.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GOOD USE OF TIME

Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow ; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. (Matt. vi, 34.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that God gives you now full and ample time to serve Him and to do good. You are to employ it only in winning heaven : *I gave her time that she might do penance.* (Apoc. ii, 21.) After a little while He will take this time from you, and you will have not even a moment for yourself : *Time shall be no longer.* (Apoc. x, 6.) And then what a strict account He will demand from you of that same time which He gave you : *He hath called against me the time.* (Lam. i, 15.)

APPLICATION. Think seriously how you employ your time, whether in things useful, or vain. God gives it you that you may employ it in the acquisition of heaven ; and perhaps you waste it. When time is ended for you and the time of your Lord is come, you will then recognise its real value, but then it will be too late.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We will praise thee, O God : we will praise, and we will call upon thy name. We will relate thy wondrous works.* (Ps. lxxiv, 2.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that when time is ended for you, God will take His time for judging you. But

what does this mean ? He says by the mouth of the Psalmist : *I will judge justices.* (Ps. lxxiv, 2.) It means, according to the Hebrew text, that He will judge with rectitude, with rigour, and by the most strict rules of justice. Hence in that day mercy will no more have place, and justice will be all in all.

Application. The holiest men trembled and feared at the thought of the supreme rigour with which God would judge them at the end of their lives. Wherefore they never ceased to weep for their sins, to make satisfaction for them by penance, to examine minutely their consciences, in order to be able to pay their account in this life at the tribunal of mercy, and without waiting for the dreadful day of judgment. But possibly you fear but little the judgment that divine justice will pass upon you in that last day, and waste the time that you now have given you in order to profit by the Divine mercy.

Affections and resolutions. *The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.* (Ps. xviii, 10.)

Consider thirdly that the words *I will judge justices* also mean that God in that day will not only judge your sins, but that He will also judge your just deeds, that is your good works. He will examine whether you did them at the right time, for the right end, in the right way, and under all the right circumstances.

Application. You undoubtedly do many actions good in themselves in your life, such as those of praying, hearing Mass and receiving the holy sacraments. But how do you do them ? With how much distraction, with how little real application of mind, with how many defects mixed up with them ! And

for all these good works which you do so badly you will have to be judged, and that with the utmost rigour. For what matters is not the actual good work itself, but the way you do it. And do you not fear or dread this judgment? Pray to God that He may give you light to understand and realise now, how solemn it will be.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He shall judge the world in equity, he shall judge the people in justice.* (Ps. ix, 9.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

AFFLICTIONS FROM THE HAND OF GOD

You now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice. (John xvi, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the apparently strange consolation, that holy Job begged of God in the midst of all his afflictions. He asked for a fresh affliction, and together with the affliction he asked for patience: *And that this may be my comfort, that in afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not, nor I contradict the words of the Holy One.* (Job vi, 10.) To conform oneself to the will of God when He sends you prosperity and does not try you, is an easy thing to do, but brings little consolation to the soul. But to conform oneself to the will of God fully, and to be consoled when He presses His hand in afflictions, this is true consolation to the spirit of the perfect.

APPLICATION. Blessed indeed are you if you can come to this high state of seeking your consolations in fresh sufferings and in still greater afflictions! And yet you should aspire to this, for in fact we are not here to enjoy life but to suffer. Therefore you will

never have true happiness, nor will you ever be content, until you come to find your comfort in suffering.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *When I was in trouble I cried unto the Lord and he heard me.* (Ps. cxix, 1.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY the sincere wish of holy Job for suffering. He sat on the dung hill with sores from head to foot and, thus afflicted by God, He asked specially to suffer more. He feared lest God Who is so good, seeing him in such tribulation, might be touched. Therefore he asked, and almost encouraged, Him to continue to treat him with such rigour as would reduce him even to ashes. Now observe to what high virtue mere human nature like your own can arrive by fervour of spirit.

APPLICATION. Be ashamed of your own weakness. Pray to God to give you light to know what a great blessing it is to suffer for Him in this life. Thus by His grace will He strengthen the weakness of your flesh.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My hand shall help him : and my arm shall strengthen him.* (Ps. lxxxviii, 22.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that holy Job in asking for sufferings, asked at the same time that he might not oppose himself to them when they came, but that he might accept them with complete resignation. Like a truly humble soul, he did not trust himself in this his longing. We very often wish to labour and to suffer much for God. However we may easily presume and trust too much in ourselves, and not pray from our heart that God would help us in the act itself. Hence our longing quickly vanishes, and we lose that perfect conformity to the divine will which we should have in our afflictions.

APPLICATION. No circumstances of time, or of lack

of strength, should make trials seem inopportune, nor prevent you from accepting affliction with perfect resignation from the hand of God. This is what holy Job also asked for when he pleaded for sufferings, and this you should ask for all the more because you are so exceedingly weak. Trust less then to your desires, which, although they are good and holy, will never avail you without the special help and assistance of God.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *There also shall thy hand lead me : and thy right hand shall hold me.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 10.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. (John vi, 69.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that nothing so animates scholars in their study as the goodness and learning of their master. But what earthly master can compare with Jesus Christ, Who knows so well how to teach those who frequent His school? And yet how small is the number of those who are willing to place themselves under such a Master, whereas crowds flock to the deceitful school of the world!

APPLICATION. How much ought you therefore to thank God that He allows you to be under such a Master, and that He has called you to his Holy Church, His true and only school. Here you can, if you will, receive and rejoice in His teaching. If you do not hear the voice of your Master and profit by it, all the fault lies with yourself.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Blessed is the man*

whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord : and shalt teach him out of thy law. (Ps. xciii, 12.)

Consider secondly that no master imparts to his scholars his more lofty teaching, unless he sees that they are well instructed in the first elements and in his more simple lessons. Think seriously how much pains God has taken with you to direct your spirit, that is to detach you from the world and from your bad inclinations of pride, ambition, and of self-love. After all the years that you have passed in His school, does it seem to you that you have made much progress ? Why then do you wonder that He does not give you those lessons of more sublime lights, which He usually gives in prayer to the more instructed ?

Application. Never can you be fully instructed by such a worthy Master, if you are not also first well grounded by Him. Let Him therefore take from you your overwhelming affection for your own ease and your own will, so that then He may give to you higher and more noble lessons.

Affections and resolutions. *Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God. Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right land.* (Ps. cxlii, 10.)

Consider thirdly that the teaching most proper to such a master is that, which concerns His laws and commands. You may be saved and become holy without a deep knowledge of the higher mysteries, but you cannot be saved without the knowledge and practice of His laws and commandments. Therefore strive to perfect yourself in this knowledge. For it is that which will bring you happiness. What good will your knowledge of philosophy, of literature, of science over which you weary yourself so greatly, do you, if you come to be lost ?

APPLICATION. Learn then from this divine Master the true practical science of the divine law, which He teaches you as the most important of all, and the most necessary to make you happy here and hereafter: *Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord: and shalt teach him out of thy law.* (Ps. xciii, 12.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: and teach me thy justifications.* (Ps. cxviii, 135.)

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE LAST JUDGMENT

(Read Matt. xxiv, 15–35.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that, at the end of each one's life, God passes the particular judgment on his individual soul, and that at the end of the world He will hold the universal judgment on all men. Then will the glory and the reward of the elect be increased, as will also the confusion and punishment of the reprobate. Then will appear the justification of divine Providence which is now so utterly misunderstood. The good are seen to be oppressed while the wicked are in prosperity; the virtuous are despoiled of this world's goods and the bad are often enriched. Then however these dispositions of divine Providence, which now seem to us so unequal, will be seen to have been all ordered with supreme wisdom for the divine glory and for our good.

APPLICATION. When at times then you may seem to see something, which to your little understanding appears ill regulated in the government or order of the world, recall to mind the warning of the Apostle: *Judge not before the time, until the Lord come.* (1 Cor.

iv, 5.) Only on that day will the wise ordering of Providence be perfectly apparent in all that may now seem disorder, just as a piece of tapestry, which if seen on the reverse side seems to be a confusion of ill-ordered stitches and texture, proves, when seen on its right side, to be a most artistically arranged piece of work.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He shall judge the world in equity, and he shall judge the people in justice.* (Ps. ix, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that when man is near to death his eyes become dimmed, his complexion pale, and his senses and his strength are all seen to fail. So likewise at the end of the world all the elements will be cast into confusion. The sun, the moon and the stars will be eclipsed; the earth will be shaken by horrible earthquakes; a most terrible fire will destroy woods, houses, cities and all that is found upon the earth. Then will be seen clearly what was the worth of that earth that was so passionately beloved of men. All its pomp and all its riches will in a moment be devoured by fire.

APPLICATION. How you should thank God that He has thus beforehand made you know the true value of the goods of this world. All will be so shortly and so suddenly reduced to ashes and mere nothingness!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.* (Ps. xviii, 10.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, when the earth shall be destroyed by the devouring fire, the trumpet shall sound from the four quarters of the world and summon

the dead from their graves to judgment: *Arise ye dead, and come to the judgment.* In a moment by the ministry of angels the bodies of the dead shall be seen, re-united to their souls and assembled in the valley of Jehosaphat. At that gathering there will be no distinction between rich and poor, noble and plebeian, monarch and vassal, but only between the good and the bad. Then will it be clear that the only true good is the goodness of virtue, and the only real evil that of sin. Consider, too, the great difference that will be seen between the reprobate and the elect. The souls of the elect will be re-united to bodies more resplendent than the sun, adorned with the four gifts of glory, and raised aloft so as to be nearer the throne of the Most High; the souls of the reprobate will be re-united to loathsome bodies resembling firebrands of hell and will remain in the company of the devils.

APPLICATION. One of these two lots must be yours. Choose now which it is to be. For if now in this world you strive so eagerly to attain an honourable position, and if it so displeases you to be ignored, or to have a sickly or an ill-disposed body, with how much more ardour, then, should you strive in that day of judgment to have a position of true honour and B glorious body. The good and glory of that day will be never-ending.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Let death come upon them: and let them go down alive into hell. But I have cried: and the Lord will save me.* (Ps. liv, 16, 17.)

MONDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OUR LORD COMING AS JUDGE

They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. (Matt. xxiv, 30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that, with very different sentiments, the elect and the reprobate will await the coming of the Son of God. He will descend from heaven with great majesty, accompanied by all the angels in visible form, who in great state will bear the standard of the cross. At the sight of the cross, says the Gospel, all the elect and all the reprobate will weep, the elect from joy that they had embraced it in this life with so much profit to themselves, the reprobate because to their loss they had rejected it.

APPLICATION. In the state in which you now find yourself, were you to see in the great valley of Jehosaphat this sign of the cross descending from heaven as the sign of Christ the judge, would you weep for joy or from sorrow and fear ? You also must be present at this scene one day. Therefore strive now to be among the lovers of the cross, and not among those who hate it, *whose end is destruction.* (Philipp. iii, 19.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My soul hath coveted to long for thy justifications, at all times.* (Ps. cxviii, 20.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that by the cross will be seen the Judge, seated on a throne of clouds with great majesty in His divine nature, and with such great glory in His glorified Humanity, that neither sun, moon, nor stars shall appear bright in His presence. At this sight what will be the terror and the fear of the reprobate ! What a boon it would be for them on that day to be buried under the ruins of the moun-

tains, that so they might not see the face of Jesus, Whom they have so grievously offended, turned away from them in disdain !

APPLICATION. On the right of the Judge, will stand that day the Most Blessed Virgin, she who has ever been the advocate of sinners ; on the left, the Apostles like assessors, true to their Lord, and with them all the apostolic followers of Christ who forsaking all things on earth for God, embraced the Evangelical Counsels. Oh how in that day will virtue and the true imitation of Christ be honoured ! How unhonoured will be vice and the service of the world !

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable : their principality is exceedingly strengthened.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that on that day the books will be opened, that is, the consciences of all will be made manifest. Each one will most clearly see, not only every good and bad deed done by himself in this life, but also those done by others. Thus before the eyes of men and of angels will be laid bare all your works, all your thoughts, all your words ; the good that they may be approved, the evil that they may be condemned. This good and evil will not be estimated as the world now reckons it, but precisely as it is estimated in the divine mind. What confusion it will then be for the wicked to have all their most secret sins manifested to all in that assembly ! What honour for the good to see even their most secret virtues proclaimed ! And even their sins, that have been cleansed away by contrition and penance, will cause, not shame, but consolation.

APPLICATION. Now you fear so much the judgment of men about your life and your actions. How is it that you think so little of the judgment that will

hereafter be made in the valley of Jehosaphat ? Think of this often and seriously, so that the remembrance of it may conquer all human respect. Strive to do only that which will bring you honour at the last day, and fly all that will cause you any confusion then.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy knowledge is become wonderful unto me : it is high, and I cannot reach unto it.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 6.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SENTENCE AT THE LAST JUDGMENT

Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom. . . . Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. (Matt. xxv, 34, 41.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY the judgments that will be pronounced, and firstly, that in favour of the elect. To them with a loving and joyous mien He will say : *Come, ye blessed of my Father*, from your labours to rest, from weeping to rejoicing, from warfare to a crown. *Possess you the kingdom*, showing by this word "possess" the perpetuity and security with which they shall enjoy the blessed glory for all ages. *He that shall overcome shall possess these things.* (Apoc. xxi, 7.) The beatific vision is called the kingdom, to denote the greatness and magnificence that the just will have in possessing every good gift of God.

APPLICATION. Think here of the feelings of joy in the hearts of the elect as they hear themselves called to the possession of such a kingdom, and an eternal one, given them in justice for those short and light afflictions, which they suffered in serving faithfully their Lord and God. You too shall participate in this joy, if you now share in their sufferings.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us : for the years in which we have seen evils.* (Ps. lxxxix, 15.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY how the Judge, when He has pronounced the judgment in favour of the elect, will turn to the reprobate. In tones of indignation He will utter their sentence of condemnation : *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* What unhappiness to be for ever exiled from the face of God ! And what misery, besides being exiled, to burn in fire for ever ! *Depart from me into everlasting fire.*

APPLICATION. And all this will be most just. For the wicked in sinning have done two evils ; one by impiously turning their backs upon God, the other in opening their hearts to creatures in open defiance of God. Therefore, according to their hatred of God, will their punishment be meted out to them : *He shall not see the glory of God.* (Isa. xxvi, 10.) The pain of sense too will correspond to their sinful love of creatures here : *They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* (Apoc. xx, 10.) Resolve to escape at any cost so dreadful a sentence.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The sorrows of death surrounded me : and the torrents of iniquity troubled me. The sorrows of hell encompassed me.* (Ps. xvii, 5–6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that Christ will summon the elect to His kingdom, and cast away the reprobate into their eternal prison. Thus will the elect be more honoured in the presence of their adversaries, who on earth had persecuted and despised them, and the reprobate the more tormented at seeing the glory of the elect and realising their own misery. The first go to their kingdom in company with Christ

and His angels ; the second are swallowed up by the earth and buried in hell : *These shall go into everlasting punishment ; but the just into life everlasting.* (Matt. xxv, 46.)

APPLICATION. Think of these two lots ! Which shall be yours on the day of judgment, when one of them must be yours ? You must be on the right hand or on the left ; you must either reign and rejoice eternally in heaven, or weep and lament for ever in hell.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* (Ps. xxvi, 4.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ALWAYS WATCHING

Take ye heed, watch and pray. For you know not when the time is. (Mark xiii, 33.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in these three things, take heed, watch, and pray, is comprised all that is necessary that you may be prepared for death and save your soul. The first is that you should take heed. Ponder seriously on the shortness of this present life which passes away, the uncertainty of death which comes swiftly, and the eternity of the future life which must be yours. Observe how quickly these twenty, thirty, or forty years of your life have already passed. Still more quickly will fly the few remaining years you may have to live.

APPLICATION. Who can assure you of a few years, or even of a few days, remaining to you ? Death may come and take you away when you least expect it !

Think how many daily die in the flower of their life. How many people in full health die unexpectedly. *Take heed, for ye know not when the time is*, for there is no single hour which may not very easily be your last. And yet you live as if death and eternity were far away. Think rather of eternity and of death; and think of them often. Do not act as if Christ were deceiving you, when He says to you : *You know not when.*

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *In the morning he shall flourish and pass away : in the evening he shall fall, grow dry and wither.* (Ps. lxxxix, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY yet another thing which is necessary. It is that you should *watch.* This has two meanings. The first is that you should not thoughtlessly and carelessly misuse the time, which is so precious, that has been given you to gain treasures for eternity. Watch, for there is no time to lose. *Love not sleep lest poverty oppress thee.* (Prov. xx, 13.) The other meaning is that you must watch lest, by living in sloth and idleness, you lose guard and command over yourself, and become a prey to the insults of your enemies and of your unregulated appetites.

APPLICATION. Therefore stand awake and on the watch against your internal and external adversaries. For they will cause your death when you least expect it. Awake, by listening to the voice of God Who calls you to live a better life, for He may never call you again, but leave you to sleep on in your carelessness and in your sins.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold thou hast made my days measurable : and my substance is as nothing before thee.* (Ps. xxxviii, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY the third thing that is needed,

which is *to pray*. This means that you must not cease to commend yourself to God. You cannot be always actually engaged in vocal or mental prayer, but you must above all things never neglect your prayer at the appointed times. You should also during the day often lift your heart to God, and make known to Him the desire and need you have of His divine assistance. *The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor.* (Ps. x, 17.)

APPLICATION. The shorter these affections and desires are, the more often repeated ought they to be. Think also often of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which is frequently so close to you. And above all think of death. For the fear of death will make you commend yourself to God with all your heart both earnestly and frequently.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Hearken to my voice, when I cry to thee. Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight.* (Ps. cxl, 1, 2.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FINAL PERSEVERANCE

He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved. (Matt. x, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that your salvation is a work that belongs wholly to God, whilst at the same time it belongs wholly to you. Therefore you must co-operate incessantly and with great solicitude ; with *fear and trembling work out your salvation.* (Phil. ii, 12.) For until the very end you will be uncertain whether you will secure it or not, because of the dangers which surround you. Beneath you is hell, from whence proceed those evil spirits that assault

you; about you is the deceitful world full of snares; and within you are your passions and evil inclinations.

APPLICATION. In the midst of so many perils, how can you do otherwise than tremble and that with exceeding fear and dread? For it concerns a matter you must make sure of, if you wish to avoid a loss that will be eternal.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The fear of death is fallen upon me, trembling is come upon me.* (Ps. liv, 5, 6.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY in what this fear should principally consist. In keeping yourself humble, because, in spite of all your good works, you need always that God should work in you with the helps of His efficacious grace. He gives you these of His bounty and not of necessity, and He may cease to give them to you when He wills. See then how it behoves you to fear and tremble in His presence, recognising that whatever good you do comes from God. *It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish.* (Ibid.)

APPLICATION. With preventing grace God moves you to good, illuminating your intellect and inflaming your will: *He worketh in you to will.* By concomitant grace step by step He accompanies you: *He worketh in you to accomplish.* This being so, realise that you live in continual need of His efficacious grace, and that He of Himself is not obliged to give you this.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I am needy and poor, O God, help me. Thou art my helper and my deliverer, O Lord, make no delay.* (Ps. lxix, 6.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that, although God can cease whenever He wills to give you His efficacious grace to act, yet never will He fail to give it to you, if you yourself fail not to have recourse to Him and to com-

mend yourself to Him. Therefore this He desires to bring about by your fear, that you should always abide close to Him for your safety, by invoking Him and beseeching Him to save you from danger. He gives a first grace to those who do not ask it, but, according to St. Augustine, after the first grace He does not give any other except to those who ask for it.

APPLICATION. God gave you the great grace of the Catholic faith without your asking Him. He will not give you the grace to persevere holily in it to the end, if you do not commend yourself to Him and beg it of Him earnestly and perseveringly. God says: *I will pour upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers.* (Zac. xii, 10.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I have cried to thee, for thou, O God, hast heard me: O incline thy ear unto me, and hear my words.* (Ps. xvi, 6.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FIDELITY

You are they who have continued with me in my temptations. (Luke xxii, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that in the same way as the life of man is made up of days and nights, so is it also made up of prosperous and of adverse seasons. Sometimes the prosperous will prevail, and sometimes the adverse, just as sometimes it is night and sometimes day. For all are from God: *Thine is the day and Thine is the night.* (Ps. lxxiii, 16.) If you are faithful in both times you will then receive the just reward. In order to be faithful in the night of adversity you must be content to wait patiently for God. Maintain your confidence and do not neglect

your usual exercises of regular observance and of devotion. *Expect the Lord* (Ps. xxxvi, 34), for adversity will have its end, and very soon He will return and visit you with increased love and will console you. In order to be faithful in prosperity strive to maintain moderation in all things. Do not do as the rivers which, when they are in flood, burst forth from their beds and rush out of their course : *Keep His way.* (Ibid.)

APPLICATION. You will be blessed if you know how to be faithful to God in whatever state you may be, whether prosperous or adverse. *He will exalt you* from earth to heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Expect the Lord and keep his way : and he will exalt thee to inherit the land.* (Ps. xxxvi, 34.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that the way God *will exalt you* is by giving you possession of heaven, the true land of promise and your true inheritance. But do not think to obtain this heritage without effort, without hard labour, and without meriting it. In order to obtain the inheritance of your living father you must obey him, honour him, and conduct yourself as a good son ; and, as paradise is the heritage from a Father Who never dies, it behoves you all the more to secure it by due homage rendered to Him, and by fidelity when you are tried, whether by adverse or by prosperous circumstances.

APPLICATION. Take heed then lest God may take this heritage from you, as He took the land of promise from those children of Israel, who stood not faithful to Him in the trial to which He put them in the wilderness.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *They that wait*

upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land. (Ps. xxxvi, 9.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how God will exalt you, if indeed you are worthy of it. This you will understand at the great day of judgment, *when the sinners shall perish.* (Ibid.) For at the same time as you see the justice shown in condemning the sinful, you will know the mercy that is shown to you in saving you. You will see on that day the miserable lot and the confusion of the reprobate, condemned both body and soul to be buried in hell, and on the other hand, the blessings and honours of the elect raised to reign with Christ. Oh, how you will then realise the immense difference between these two lots.

APPLICATION. And how much you will then bless God. In calling you to His holy faith and the Catholic Church, He has given you grace to be faithful to Him, and to enter into the number of those who *serve Him day and night* (Apoc. vii, 15), as well in the day of prosperity as in the night of adversity.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Come in before his presence with exceeding great joy.* (Ps. xcix, 2.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HELP IN TRIBULATION

Lord save us, we perish. (Matt. viii, 25.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that the hour of death is a time of special tribulation, in which you will have the very greatest need of help. Death is in truth a great tribulation for both soul and body. For the body, its sufferings give it often not one moment of repose or respite. It is a still greater trial to the soul from the fear of going out of this

world, of leaving a body that is dear to it, and perhaps too from remorse of conscience, knowing that it must render a most strict account of all its life and of all its sins.

APPLICATION. Oh what a tribulation may not all this be to you in that last hour, on which depends an eternity of punishment or of reward? Pray earnestly to God every day of your life that He may not stand afar off from you at that last dread hour. Lord save us, or else we perish!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Depart not from me. For tribulation is very near: for there is none to help me.* (Ps. xxi, 12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this tribulation accompanying death is nearer to you than you think. How many accidents might destroy you at any moment! The ten, twenty or thirty years that you imagine you may yet live, will they not fly away swiftly? Think of the years that are past, and see how quickly they have gone.

APPLICATION. Therefore lose no time. Put all things in order. Be ready for the great journey! *Furnish thyself to go into captivity.* (Jer. xlvi, 19.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The troubles of my heart are multiplied: deliver me from my necessities.* (Ps. xxiv, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that the tribulation of death is at hand and that it will not bring any help for you. If God is not there to help, woe be to you! Who is there who, at that dread hour of death, can ward off from you the assaults and the temptations of the devil, so that you become not an unhappy prey to his fury? Who is there that can give you sufficient help to overcome the difficulties that you will then encoun-

ter, and to make safely the great passage to eternity? How necessary then is it that you should now stand well with your Lord. For it is He alone Who can help you in the hour of death!

APPLICATION. Take, then, often into your hands that crucifix holding which you hope to die, and kissing it devoutly promise to be always faithful to Jesus Christ. At the same time beg Him with hot tears *not to leave thee nor forsake thee.* (Hebr. xiii, 5.) For if in that hour Jesus be your friend, you will have no need of any other.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man can do unto me.* (Ps. cxvii, 6.)

SUPPLEMENTARY MEDITATIONS

THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

(DECEMBER 8TH.)

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. (Luke i, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that it was the good pleasure of the three Divine Persons to preserve Mary from original sin. It was the good pleasure of the Father because Mary was His first begotten daughter. As Jesus was the first begotten son of God, *The first-born of every creature* (Col. i, 15), so Mary, destined to be the Mother of Jesus, might always be considered to be His first begotten daughter, and consequently she was always specially favoured by God with His choicest graces. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways.* (Prov. viii, 22.) For the honour of His divine Son it pleased the Father to preserve Mary from every stain of sin. He also destined her to crush the head of the infernal serpent that had seduced

mankind; *She shall crush thy head.* (Gen. iii, 15.) How could He then have ever permitted her to have been first a slave of Satan? Mary, moreover, was likewise destined to be the advocate of sinners. Consequently it was also suitable that God should preserve her from sin, so that she might ever be guiltless of the sins of our human race for which she was to intercede.

APPLICATION. Cherish devotion to Mary Immaculate, the great model of all purity and the all powerful advocate of sinners.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the innocent thou wilt be innocent.* (Ps. xvii, 26.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that it was also the good pleasure of the Son to have an Immaculate Mother. He Himself elected her as His Mother. One could never imagine that a son, who might have a queen as his mother, would choose rather a slave. How can we even imagine that the Eternal Word, able to have His Mother ever Immaculate and always the friend of God, would allow her to be at any time stained with sin or an enemy of God? Moreover St. Augustine says: *The flesh of Christ is the flesh of Mary.* The Son of God would have shrunk from taking the flesh even of a St. Agnes, of a St. Gertrude, or of a St. Theresa, for all these holy virgins before their baptism had been stained with original sin. The devil could have claimed that their nature had once been subject to himself. Jesus Christ did not however abhor to be made man in the womb of Mary: *He did not abhor the Virgin's womb,* for she had always been pure and immaculate. Besides, as St. Thomas says, Mary was preserved from every actual sin, even

venial, otherwise she could not have been worthy or even capable of being Mother of God. And not less capable would she have been, had she been stained by original sin which renders a soul hateful in God's sight?

APPLICATION. God hates even the least stain of even venial sin. Always labour to keep a great purity of conscience in all things.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Who is God but the Lord? Or who is God but our God? God who hath girt me with strength; and made my way blameless.* (Ps. xvii, 32, 33.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY how it was also the good pleasure of the Holy Spirit that this most beloved spouse of His should be immaculate. The redemption of fallen mankind having once been decreed by God, the Holy Spirit desired that His spouse should be redeemed in the most perfect manner of all, by preserving her from the stain of sin. If God preserved the body of Mary after her death, how much more should we believe that He preserved her soul from the foul taint of sin? Therefore this immaculate spouse is called *a garden enclosed, a sealed fountain*, because the enemy never entered into the blessed soul of Mary. She is praised therefore as being all-beautiful, ever beloved, and ever pure. *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.* (Cant. iv, 7.)

APPLICATION. Ah, my most beauteous Lady, I rejoice to see thee so beloved of thy God for thy purity and for thy beauty. I thank God intensely for having preserved thee from all sin. Ah, my Queen! as thou art so beloved by the most Blessed Trinity, do not disdain to cast thine eyes on my soul so stained with sins. Obtain for me from God pardon

and my eternal salvation. With thy sweetness thou hast drawn many hearts to love thee. Draw mine also, so that from this day forth it shall love none other than God and thee. Thou knowest already that I have placed all my hope in thee. Never leave me, my most dear Mother. Assist me ever by thine intercession in life, and especially at death. Make me to die loving thee and calling upon thee, so that I may come to love thee for ever in heaven. Amen.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Virgins shall be brought after her unto the King.* (Ps. xliv, 15.) *Ave filia Dei Patris! Ave mater Dei Filii! Ave sponsa Spiritus Sancti! Ave templum totius Trinitatis!*

FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(FEBRUARY 2ND)

After the days of her purification were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke ii, 22.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that when the time had come when according to the law Mary should go up to the temple to be purified, and to present Jesus to the divine Father, she departed with Joseph. Mary took her dear infant, the divine Lamb, to offer Him to God, in token of that great sacrifice that one day this Son was to accomplish upon the Cross.

APPLICATION. O my God, with Mary's offering I also unite my own. I offer Thee Thy Son made Man, and by His merits I pray Thee to give me Thy grace. I do not indeed deserve it, but Jesus sacrificed Himself to obtain it for me. For the love of Jesus then have mercy on me.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Behold, O God our*

protector: and look on the face of thy Christ. (Ps. lxxxiii, 10.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that Mary enters the temple and there makes the offering of her Son in the name of the whole human race. On this day Jesus also offers Himself to the Eternal Father, "Behold Me," He says, "O My Father; to You I consecrate all My life: You have sent Me into the world to save it, behold My body, My blood and My life. I offer all to Thee for the salvation of the whole world."

APPLICATION. Wretched indeed should I have been, my Saviour, if Thou hadst not satisfied the divine justice for me! I thank Thee intensely, I love Thee with all my heart. Whom indeed should I love, if I did not love a God Who has sacrificed His life for me?

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: Burnt offering and sin offering thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come.* (Ps. xxxix, 7, 8.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that this sacrifice was more acceptable to God than any other could possibly have been, even that of all the angels and all men if they had offered Him themselves and their lives. For in this one offering of Jesus the Eternal Father received infinite honour and an infinite satisfaction. And, furthermore, the reason for this sacrifice is clearly expressed in the words of our Lord, Who said one day to Blessed Angela da Foligno: *I offered Myself for thee so that you might offer yourself to Me.*

APPLICATION. Yes, my Jesus, because You offered Your life to Your Father for me, I offer myself and all my life to Thee. In the past I have treated Thee with much ingratitude, but Thou hast promised

to forget the injuries of a sinner who repents of having offended Thee. My Jesus, I am sorry and I would wish to die of grief. I was dead in my sins, but now I hope for life from Thee, and all my life shall be to love Thee, O infinite Good. Make me to love Thee, and I ask Thee nothing more. Give all the things of this earth to those who desire them; for myself I desire nothing but the gift of Thy love. My Jesus, Thou alone canst satisfy me. O Mary, my Queen and Mother, through Thy intercession I hope to obtain everything I ask.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.* (Ps. lxxxiii, 3.)

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(MARCH 19TH)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that, in order to understand the great power of the intercession of St. Joseph with Jesus Christ, it is enough to know what the Gospel says: *He was subject to them.* (Luke ii, 51.) For so many years then the Son of God was occupied in most carefully and minutely obeying Joseph and Mary! It sufficed that Joseph by a word or sign showed his wish, and Jesus at once obeyed. This humility of Jesus in obeying, shows us that the dignity of St. Joseph is exceedingly great.

APPLICATION. Have great devotion to St. Joseph and encourage others to do likewise.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He sent a man before them: Joseph, who was sold for a slave, until his word came. The word of the Lord inflamed him.* (Ps. civ, 17–19.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that which St. Theresa says of

the confidence we should all have in the protection of St. Joseph: "It seems that God has granted to the other saints the power to help us in some one necessity; but it is beyond doubt that this saint gives succour in all, and that God would have us understand that, as on earth He willed to be subject to him, so in heaven He grants all that the saint asks of Him. This many have proved by experience whom I had counselled to commend themselves to him. I have never known any one, who has shown him special service, whom I have not also seen advance in virtue. I beg for the love of God that any one who does not believe this would only try. Moreover I do not know how any one can think of the Queen of angels, and of the days that she passed during the childhood of Jesus, and not thank St. Joseph for the support and help he gave at that time to the Mother and the Son."

APPLICATION. Follow the counsel of Holy Writ in all your troubles: *Go to Joseph and do all that he shall say to you.* (Gen. xli, 55.)

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He made him master of his house, and ruler of all his possessions.* (Ps. civ, 21.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that we should be especially devout to St. Joseph, in order that he may obtain for us the grace of a happy death. Having saved the infant Jesus from the snares of Herod, he has the special privilege of protecting the dying from the snares of the devil. Moreover because of the protection he gave for so many years to Jesus and to Mary, in providing a house and food for them by the labour of his hands, he has the privilege of obtaining for those who are devoted to him, the special aid of Jesus and of Mary at the time of their death.

APPLICATION. My holy protector, St. Joseph, by my sins I have indeed deserved an unhappy death, but if you will defend me, most assuredly I shall not be lost. You are not only a special friend of my Judge, but you were also His guardian and teacher. Recommend me to your Jesus Who loves you so much. I place myself under your patronage, accept me for your servant for ever. By the holy familiarity with Jesus and Mary which you enjoyed during life, obtain from God that I may never more separate myself from their love. And by the assistance which Jesus and Mary rendered you at your death, obtain for me. at my death, a special help from Jesus and Mary, Holy Virgin, by the love you bore to your spouse St. Joseph, do not fail to help me at the moment of my death.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff: they have comforted me.* (Ps. xxii, 4.)

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(MARCH 25TH)

Blessed art thou among women. (Luke i, 28.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that, when Almighty God decreed to send His Son to become man in order to redeem mankind, He chose a Virgin Mother who was the purest of all virgins, the most holy, and the most humble. Behold whilst Mary prays in her little house of Nazareth for the coming of the Redeemer, she sees an angel who salutes her saying: *Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women.* (Luke i, 28.) What did the

humble Virgin do on hearing these words which so much honoured her? She was not elated; she was silent and was troubled, esteeming herself all unworthy of such praise: *She was troubled at his saying.*

Application. O Mary, thou art so humble, and I am so proud! Obtain for me a holy humility like unto thine.

Affections and resolutions. *The Lord will save the humble of spirit.* (Ps. xxxiii, 19.)

Consider secondly whether this praise inspired into her mind the thought, that possibly she was the destined Mother of the Redeemer. Far from that, it only caused a great inward fear, so that the angel had need to calm her, saying: *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.* And then he announced that she was the chosen Mother of the Saviour of the world: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus.*

Application. Oh, blessed indeed art thou, O Mary! So dear thou wast and art to thy God! Mary, my hope, have pity on me.

Affections and resolutions. *Because thou hast been my helper, I will rejoice under the covert of thy wings.* (Ps. lxii, 8.)

Consider thirdly the words that St. Bernard addresses to her: "Make haste, O holy Virgin; why dost thou delay in giving thy consent? The Eternal Word awaits it in order to clothe Himself with flesh and become thy Son. We too all await it, who were miserably condemned to an eternal death. If thou dost consent to become His Mother, we shall all be saved. Answer, my Lady, quickly, do not any longer let the world wait for that salvation which depends

on thy consent." But now let us indeed rejoice, for Mary has already replied to the angel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.* Behold, she said, the servant of the Lord, one who is bound to do whatever her Lord commands. If He has chosen a servant as His Mother, no praise to the servant but only to the goodness of God Who has deigned so greatly to honour her.

APPLICATION. Heartfelt thanks to God for the infinite favour of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity! Great joy also with the Blessed Virgin who thus becomes the true Mother of God!

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *God is our king before ages: he hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.* (Ps. lxxiii, 12.)

FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(JULY 2ND)

Mary went into the hill country with haste. (Luke i, 39.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Mary started from Nazareth to go to the city of Hebron, a distance of some seventy miles. This would mean a seven days' journey, at least, over rough hills and in no other company than that of Joseph her spouse. The holy Virgin hastened her steps, as St. Luke tells us: she *went into the hill country with haste.*

APPLICATION. Tell us, O holy Virgin, why thou didst undertake that long and difficult journey, and why thou didst journey in such haste? I went (she would answer) to fulfil my duty of charity. I went to give comfort to a family. So then, O great Mother of God, your duty and your office is to console and

to dispense graces to souls. Oh, come to visit and console my soul also. Your visit sanctified the house of Elizabeth. Come, O Mary, and sanctify me also.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Say to my soul: I am thy salvation.* (Ps. xxxiv, 3.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that when the Blessed Virgin arrived at the house of Elizabeth, although she had already become the Mother of God, yet she is the first to salute her relative: *She entered and saluted Elizabeth.* Elizabeth, enlightened by God, knew that the Divine Word was already become man as the Son of Mary. Hence she called her blessed among women. She extolled that divine fruit that was in her womb: *Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* Full alike of joy and of confusion she exclaimed: *And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to visit me?* How could I hope for such a grace as this, that the Mother of God should come unto me? But to these words what did the humble Mary answer? She said: *My soul doth magnify the Lord*, as if to say: Ah, Elizabeth, you indeed praise me, but I rather praise my God for having willed to exalt me and to destine me, His poor servant, to be His Mother: *He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.*

APPLICATION. O most holy Mary, as you dispense so many graces to those who ask them, I beg you to give me some of your humility. You thought yourself to be nothing before God, but I am less than nothing, because I am nothing and a sinner too at one and the same time. You can make me humble. Make me so, for the love of that God Who made you His Mother.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *We are filled in the*

morning with thy mercy, we have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us. (Ps. lxxxix, 14, 15.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY what occurred at the first sound of the voice of Mary as she saluted Elizabeth. *When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.* (Luke i, 41.) The infant John the Baptist exulted with gladness because of the divine grace given to him before his birth; Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit; and Zachary, father of the Baptist, was presently consoled by the recovery of his speech.

APPLICATION. Thus it is most true, O my Queen and Mother, that divine graces are dispensed through thee and souls are sanctified. Do not then, my most beloved Lady, forget me, thy poor servant, who love thee, and in thee have placed all my hope. Thy prayers are all answered by that God Who so loves thee. Make haste then and pray for me, my Mother, and make me good and holy.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof, it shall not be moved.* (Ps. xlv, 5, 6.)

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(AUGUST 15TH)

Thou hast found grace with God. (Luke i, 30.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that Mary dies. But how does she die? She dies entirely detached from all affection to created things, and consumed by that divine love in which she always lived, and which wholly inflamed her most holy heart.

APPLICATION. O holy Mother, thou indeed hast left the earth, but do not forget us poor pilgrims who still dwell in this valley of tears, beset by so many enemies who desire to see us lost for all eternity. Oh, by the merit of thy most holy death, obtain for us detachment from the things of earth, the pardon of our sins, the love of God and holy perseverance. When the hour of our death comes, assist us from heaven with thy prayers. Obtain for us that we may come to adore thy divine Son along with thee in heaven.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *On the right hand stood the queen in golden raiment . . . Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear.* (Ps. xliv, 11–12.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, when Mary died, her most holy body was laid by the apostles in the sepulchre and guarded there by angels for three days, after which it was carried to paradise. But at the moment of her death her holy and beauteous soul entered into the blessed kingdom, accompanied by innumerable angels. When she entered heaven she humbly presented herself before God and adored Him, and with most intense love thanked Him for all the graces that had been lavished upon her. God embraced her and blessed her and constituted her Queen of the universe. He exalted her above all the angels and saints: *The Mother of God is exalted above the choirs of angels in the celestial kingdom.*

APPLICATION. Now if, as the Apostle says, the human mind cannot conceive the immense glory, which God has prepared in heaven for His servants who have loved Him on this earth, what must have been the glory that He gave to His Blessed Mother?

On earth she had loved Him more than all the saints and angels, and had loved Him with all her strength. So much so, that none but Mary could say to God when she reached heaven: Lord, if, on earth, I have not loved Thee as much as Thou didst merit, at least I have loved Thee as much as I could.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable.* (Ps. cxxxviii, 17.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that we should rejoice with Mary for the glory, with which God has enriched her. We should rejoice also for ourselves, because Mary was made our advocate at the same time that she was made Queen of the world. She is so loving an advocate, that she receives and defends all the guilty souls who commend themselves to her. Finally she is so powerful with our Judge that she gains all the causes that she defends.

APPLICATION. O our Queen and Advocate, our salvation is in Thy hands. If thou pray for us we shall be saved. Say to thy Son that thou desirest to have us with thee in heaven. He denies thee nothing that thou askest of Him. O life, O hope, O sweetness, our Mother Mary, pray for us to Jesus, thy divine Son, Amen.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Remove not thy help to a distance from me, look towards my defence.* (Ps. xxi, 20.)

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(SEPTEMBER 8TH)

Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus. (Matt. i, 16.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY that before the birth of Mary, the world was buried in the darkness of sin. *When Mary was born, the dawn arose*, says a holy Father. Already it had been said of Mary: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array.* (Cant. vi, 9.) The earth rejoices when the dawn appears, because the dawn is the forerunner of the sun. The birth of Mary brought joy to all the world, for she was the precursor of the sun of justice, Jesus Christ. He made Himself her Son and came into the world, so that by His death He might save us.

APPLICATION. Exultingly then does Holy Church sing: *Thy birth, O Virgin Mother of God, brought joy to the whole world: for out of thee arose the Sun of justice, who hath given us life everlasting.* By the birth of Mary our remedy was also born, our consolation and our salvation, for by means of Mary we received the Saviour. Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our Life, our Sweetness and our Hope.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Shew us, O Lord, thy mercy; and grant us thy salvation. He will speak peace unto his people.* (Ps. lxxxiv, 8, 9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that this privileged child was destined to be the Mother of the Eternal Word. Hence God enriched her with so much grace that, even from her Immaculate Conception, her holiness exceeded the holiness of all the saints and angels

together. For she received grace of a far superior order to theirs, corresponding to her dignity of Mother of God.

APPLICATION. O Holy Child, O full of grace, I a miserable sinner salute thee and reverence thee. Thou art the beloved and the delight of God. Have pity on me, who for my sins have been an abomination before God. Thou, O most pure Virgin, hast, ever since thine infancy, known how to gain and to win fully the heart of God. He denies thee nothing. He does all that thou askest. In thee then is all my hope. Recommend me to thy Son, and I shall be safe.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.* (Ps. lxxxvi. 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that when Mary was destined to be the Mother of our Redeemer, she was at the same time destined to be the mediatrix with God for us sinners. Hence the angelical doctor St. Thomas says that Mary received as much grace as would suffice to save all mankind. Consequently St. Bernard calls her an aqueduct in the fulness of which we all participate.

APPLICATION. O my Queen, O Mediatrix of sinners, fulfil thy office! Intercede for me. I would not that my sins should prevent me from confiding in thee. O great Mother of God, I trust in thee so completely that, if my salvation were placed in my own hands, I would myself at once put it back in thine. O Mary take me under thy protection, and that is sufficient for me.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *With thee is the fountain of life.* (Ps. xxxv, 10.)

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(NOVEMBER 21ST)

My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (Luke i, 47.)

CONSIDER FIRSTLY how the holy child Mary, being just three years old, was led by her holy parents to the temple according to the promise they had made. The appointed day having arrived, the immaculate little maiden set out from Nazareth with St. Joachim and St. Anne. They were undoubtedly accompanied also by a troop of angels, who went with this holy child destined to be the Mother of their Creator and also their Sovereign Queen.

APPLICATION. Go, says St. Germanus, go, O Blessed Virgin, to the house of the Lord. There await the Holy Spirit, Who will come to make thee Mother of the Eternal Word and our mother also.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *I will come into thy house; I will worship towards thy holy temple, in thy fear. Conduct me, O Lord, in thy justice: because of my enemies, direct my way in thy sight.* (Ps. v, 8–9.)

CONSIDER SECONDLY that, when they reached the temple in Jerusalem, the holy child would have turned to her parents, and kneeling down kissed their hands, and sought their blessing. Then she mounted the steps of the temple, and completely renouncing the world, and all the goods it could offer her, gave and consecrated herself entirely to God. Henceforth the life of Mary in the temple was only a continual exercise of love, and a complete offering of herself to her Lord. It increased from hour to hour, even

from moment to moment, in holy virtue, strengthened indeed by divine grace.

APPLICATION. Let us bear in mind that she on her part always strove, with all her powers, to correspond to the grace of God. Mary herself revealed this to the virgin St. Elizabeth, and said to her: "Possibly you think I received graces and virtues without any effort on my part. Know then that I had no grace from God without great effort, continual prayer, ardent desires, and many tears and penances."

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I may see the delight of the Lord, and may visit his temple.* (Ps. xxvi, 4.)

CONSIDER THIRDLY that in the temple the little maiden's life was nothing else than one of prayer. Seeing that the human race was lost, and in enmity with God, she prayed continually for the coming of the Messiah. She desired to become the servant of that blessed virgin, who should be elected the Mother of God. Oh! we could have then said to her: Holy Lady, know that by thy prayers thou hast already hastened the coming of the Son of God to redeem the world. Know that thou art the blessed one chosen to be the Mother of thy Creator.

APPLICATION. O beloved one of God, O most holy child, thou prayest for all men, pray for me also. From thy infancy thou didst consecrate thyself entirely to the love of thy God. Oh then obtain for me that at least for the years of life that remain to me, I may live only for God. To-day, with thee, I too renounce all creatures and consecrate myself to the love of my

Lord. I offer myself also to thee, my Queen, to serve thee for ever. Accept me as thy devoted servant. Obtain for me the grace to be faithful to thee and to thy Son, so that one day I may come to praise and to love thee for ever in heaven. Amen.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. *He heard my voice from his holy temple, and my cry before him came into his ears.* (Ps. xvii, 7.)

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